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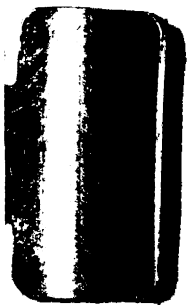

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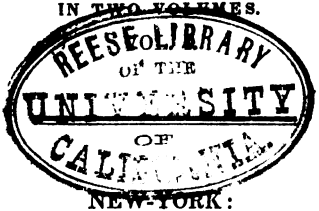

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PREFACE.

THE following work is avowedly derived from the Church History of Joseph Milner and his continuators. It is designed to present, in a more popular form, the substance of the information collected by them relative to the most remarkable period, and the most important event, which has occurred in the history of the church since the apostles' days. To exhibit an account of "the blessed Reformation" which may at all be deemed just and adequate, which may show what the Reformers really contended for, and in what spirit and for what reasons they contended for it, and which may prove in any degree attractive to the public, must be judged an object highly seasonable and of great consequence at a time when so much want of information and such gross misrepresentations prevail upon these subjects; when popery is straining every nerve to regain her lost power; when "the spirit of Protestantism has sadly degenerated;"* and when so many professed Protestants show themselves ill indeed instructed, and utterly unestablished, in what at least should be the principles of their faith.

Such a work it is here attempted to supply. No-

* Dean Milner.

thing of interest to the general reader, it is believed, has been sacrificed in making the abridgment; and yet the book has been greatly reduced in bulk; chiefly by compressing the mass of documentary evidence, curtailing the discussion of subordinate controversies, and the examination of curious and doubtful points, and pruning away superfluous sentences. Thus, while a book of moderate size is provided, which, it is hoped, may prove attractive to the young, edifying to the devout, and instructive to readers at large, the value of the original work will remain undiminished to the theological student and the more exact historical inquirer.

The former of the two volumes is to be considered as resting upon the authority of the Milners, whose statements and sentiments it conveys, and generally in their own language; for the latter volume I am altogether responsible. I have not thought it necessary to add to either volume any more than here and there an occasional reference; it being presumed that those who wish to examine authorities will, of course, resort to the original work.

After the example of the excellent Seckendorf, I dismiss my publication into the world, with the wish and prayer,—May it go forth, in this new form, as I feel assured the former part of it, at least, has done in its old one, "to the glory of God, and the good of his church!"

J. S.

Hull, April 12, 1832.

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LUTHERAN REFORMATION.

CHAPTER I.

*State of the Church.**

THE sixteenth century opened with a prospect of all others the most gloomy in the eyes of every true Christian. Corruption, both in doctrine and in practice, had exceeded all bounds; and the general face of Europe, though the name of Christ was everywhere professed, presented nothing that was properly evangelical. Great efforts indeed had been made to emancipate the church from the "powers of darkness;" and in consequence many individual souls had been conducted into the path of salvation. Still nothing like a general reformation had taken place in any part of Europe. For it must be confessed, that the labours of Claudius of Turin,† of the Waldensian Barbs, of Wiclif in England,‡ and of Huss in Bohemia,§ had not been sufficiently directed against the predominant corruptions in doctrine, though the practical abuses of the popedom had been opposed with ingenuous freedom and disinterested courage. The external branches only, rather than the bitter root itself which supported all the evils of false religion, being attacked, no permanent or extensive change had ensued. The Waldenses were too feeble to molest the popedom; and the Hussites, divided among themselves, and worn out by a long series of conten-

* This chapter is given with only a few verbal alterations from Milner
† ixth Century. ‡ xivth Century. § xvth Century.

tions, were reduced to silence. Among both were found persons of undoubted piety, but they appeared incapable of making effectual impressions on the kingdom of Antichrist. The Roman pontiffs were still the uncontrolled patrons of impiety. Neither the scandalous crimes of Alexander VI., nor the military ferocity of Julius II. (pontiffs whose actions it is foreign to the plan of this history to detail), seem to have lessened the dominion of the court of Rome, or to have opened the eyes of men so as to induce them to make a sober investigation of the nature of true religion.

But, not many years after the commencement of the sixteenth century, the world beheld an attempt to restore the light of the gospel, more evangelically judicious, more simply founded on the word of God, and more ably and more successfully conducted than any which had ever been seen since the days of Augustine.* Martin Luther, whom Divine Providence raised up for this purpose, was evidently the instrument rather than the agent of this reformation. He was led from step to step, by a series of circumstances, far beyond his original intentions; and in a manner which might evince the excellency of the power to be of God, and not of man.† Even the reformations which took place in several other parts of Europe, besides Germany, the scene of Luther's transactions, were in a great measure derived from the light which he was enabled to diffuse among mankind. And, as the peculiar excellency of the revival of the true religion now before us lay in this, that it was conversant in fundamentals of doctrine rather than in the correction of mere abuses of practice, the history of Lutheranism recommends itself in an especial manner to the study of every theological inquirer.

In endeavouring to furnish the reader with a clear and satisfactory view of this important part of ecclesiastical history, we shall particularly avail ourselves of the labours of the learned Seckendorf, who published a Latin translation of Maimbourg's‡ History, and who, in a diffusive comment, often corrected and refuted it, and at the same time supplied, from the very best materials, whatever might be wanted to

* vth Century. † 2 Cor. iv. 7.

‡ Louis Maimbourg, a learned Jesuit, wrote celebrated, though prejudiced, histories of Calvinism, Lutheranism, Arianism, &c.

illustrate the progress of Lutheranism. The authentic documents derived from the Saxon archives, and the original papers of Luther, Melancthon, and other reformers, are largely quoted by this author. He adverts also continually to the opposite accounts of the Romish writers. In fine, he seems to have examined all the best sources of information, and to have placed before his readers whatever might be needful to inform their judgments.* Seckendorf is therefore our principal, but not exclusive guide: recourse is also had to Father Paul, Du Pin, Sleidan, Thuanus, and others. The mere modern writers, who too commonly treat these interesting matters in a superficial manner, content with elegance of style and an indulgence to the popular taste, afford little service towards the execution of our plan.

In a manuscript history, extending from the year 1524 to 1541, composed by Frederic Myconius, a very able coadjutor of Luther and Melancthon, the author describes the state of religion in the beginning of this century in striking terms. "The passion and satisfaction of Christ were treated as a bare history, like the Odyssey of Homer. Concerning faith, by which the righteousness of the Redeemer and eternal life are apprehended, there was the deepest silence. Christ was described as a severe judge, ready to condemn all who were destitute of the intercession of saints, and of pontifical interest. In the room of Christ were substituted, as saviours and intercessors, the Virgin Mary, like a pagan Diana, and other saints, who from time to time had been created by the popes." Nor were men, it seems, entitled to the benefit of their prayers, except they deserved it of them by their works. What sort of works were necessary for this end was distinctly explained; not the works prescribed in the decalogue, and enjoined on all mankind, but such as enriched the priests and monks. Those who died neglecting these were consigned to hell, or at least to purgatory, till they were redeemed from it by a satisfaction made either by themselves or by their proxies. The frequent pronunciation of the Lord's Prayer and the salutation of the Virgin, and the recitation of the forms called the canonical

* "Whoever is desirous of being thoroughly acquainted with the history of that great man (Luther) needs only to read the extensive work of Seckendorf. Of its kind, it is one of the best books that have ever appeared."—*Bayle.*

hours, constantly engaged those who undertook to be religious. An incredible mass of ceremonial observances was everywhere visible; while gross wickedness was practised under the encouragement of indulgences, by which the guilt of the crimes was easily expiated. The preaching of the Word was the least part of the episcopal function: rites and processions employed the bishops perpetually when engaged in religious exercises. The number of the clergy was enormous, and their lives were most scandalous." If we add to this the testimony of Pellican, another of the reformers, "that a Greek testament could not be procured at any price in all Germany," what can be wanting to complete the picture of that darkness in which men lived? and in what did the Christian nations differ from pagans, except in the name? It may be proper to mention, that even the university of Paris, the first of all the famous schools of learning, could not furnish a single person capable of supporting a controversy against Luther on the foundation of Scripture. Scarcely any Christian doctor in the beginning of this century had a critical knowledge of the word of God.

The reader may find it useful to be detained a little longer in contemplating the situation of the Christian world at the time of Luther's appearance. The observations we have to offer for this purpose shall be arranged under four distinct heads; and they will concur to demonstrate the importance of the reformation, and to evince that the difference between Popery and Protestantism is not merely verbal.

1. The popish doctrine of indulgences was then in the highest reputation. We shall be in no danger of misrepresenting this doctrine if we state it according to the ideas of one of the ablest champions of popery, Bossuet, bishop of Meaux. The church, he tells us, imposes painful works, or sufferings, on offenders; which, being discharged, or undergone with humility, are called *satisfactions*; and when, regarding the fervour of the penitents, or other good works, she remits some part of the task, this is called *an indulgence*. For, he pretends, the infinite satisfaction of Christ may be applied in two ways, either by entire remission, without the reservation of any punishment, or by the change of a greater punishment for a less. "The first," he says, "is done in baptism, the second in the case of sins committed after baptism." And here he gives us the authority of the last general coun-

cil of Trent (which settled the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church as far as it has ever been settled), to support his assertion, namely, "The power to grant indulgences has been committed to the church by Jesus Christ, and the use of them is beneficial to salvation." Those, he observes, who depart this life indebted to divine justice for some of the pains reserved, must suffer them in another life in the state of purgatory. Reliefs are however provided in this case also. The benefit of indulgences extends, it seems, beyond the grave; and commutations for offences, offered by the friends of the deceased, are held to be valid in heaven. The foundation of all this system was generally believed to be this:—There was supposed to be an infinite treasure of merit in Christ and the saints, which was abundantly more than sufficient for themselves. Thus, what is strictly true of the Divine Saviour was asserted also of saints—that they had done works of supererogation. This treasure was said to be deposited in the church, under the conduct of the see of Rome; and was sold, literally sold for money, at that see's discretion, to those who were able and willing to pay for it: and few were found willing to undergo the course of a severe penance of unpleasant austerities when they could afford to commute it for pecuniary payments. The popes, and under them the bishops and the clergy, particularly the Dominican and Franciscan friars, had the dispensation of this treasure; which, as the pontiffs had the power of canonizing new saints at their own will, was ever growing: and, so long as the system could maintain its credit, the riches of their church, thus secularized under the appearance of religion, became a sea without a shore. No impartial examiner of authentic records will say that this account of indulgences is overcharged. These were the symptoms of the last stage of papal depravity; and, as the moral evils which they encouraged were plain to every one not totally destitute of discernment, they were the first objects assaulted by the reformers.

2. But the views of those wise and holy personages were far more extensive. They saw that a practice so scandalously corrupt was connected with the grossest ignorance of the grace of the gospel. The doctrine of justification, in its explicit form, had been lost for many ages to the Christian world. If men had really believed, that by

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ salvation was obtained, and that God "justifies the ungodly"* through faith alone, how could they have been imposed on by the traffic of indulgences? In whatever manner the papist might subtilize and divide, he was compelled by his system to hold, that by a compliance with the rules of the church, either in the way of indulgences or by some severer mode, pardon was to be obtained; and that the satisfaction of Christ was not sufficiently meritorious for this end: in other words, that "eternal life is *not* the gift of God by Jesus Christ our Lord."† And, in fact, the preachers of indulgences, whether popes themselves or their ministers, held out to the people with sufficient clearness, that the inheritance of eternal life was to be purchased by indulgences. The testimony of Sleidan (one of the most judicious and dispassionate of historians) to the nature of indulgences well deserves to be transcribed. "Pope Leo X., making use of that power which his predecessors had usurped over all Christian churches, sent abroad into all kingdoms his letters and bulls, with ample promises of the full pardon of sins, and of eternal salvation, to such as would purchase the same with money."‡ Even when the traffic of indulgences was checked by the pontiffs, as being carried on in too gross a manner, no clear account was given in what the abuse consisted. In fine, it was evident that no reformation could take place through the medium of qualifying and correcting the supposed abuses of this traffic. The system itself was wholly impious; and the right knowledge of justification was the only remedy adequate to the evil. This, therefore, the reader is to look for as the most capital object of the reformation; and thus, in the demolition of one of the vilest perversions of superstition, there suddenly arose and revived, in all its infant simplicity, that apostolical doctrine, in which is contained the great mystery of the Scriptures.

3. The state of mankind, at that time, was peculiarly adapted to the reception of so rich a display of the grace of the gospel. God sent "a plentiful rain, whereby he refreshed his inheritance when it was weary." Men were

* Rom. iv. 5. Not that the justified can continue ungodly, but that they have no previous godliness to contribute to their justification.—J. S.

† See Rom. vi. end. ‡ Hist. beginning.

bound fast in fetters of iron: their whole religion was one enormous mass of bondage. Terrors beset them on every side; and the fiction of purgatory was ever teeming to their minds with images of horror. Persons truly serious in religion, and such there ever were and ever will be (because there ever was and ever will be a true church on earth), were so clouded in their understandings by the prevailing corruptions of the hierarchy, that they could find no access to God by Jesus Christ. The road of simple faith, grounded on the divine promises, connected always with real humility, and always productive of hearty and grateful obedience, was stopped up with briers and thorns. No certain rest could be afforded to the weary mind, and a state of doubt, of allowed doubt and anxiety, was recommended by the papal system. What a joyful doctrine then was that of the real gospel of remission of sins, through Christ alone, received by faith!—a doctrine which is indeed to be found everywhere in the Scriptures: but the Scriptures were almost unknown among the people at the beginning of the reformation.

4. Should the philosophical skeptic or the pharisaical formalist express his surprise, that we lay so great a stress on the Christian article of justification, and wonder that any person should ever be at a loss to discover the way of obtaining true peace of conscience; it may be useful, towards satisfying his scruples, to remind such a character of a fourth mark of corruption, which much prevailed in the times previous to the reformation. This was the predominance of the Aristotelian philosophy in Europe; a philosophy which knew nothing of original sin and native depravity, which allowed nothing to be criminal but certain external flagitious actions, and which was unacquainted with the idea of any righteousness of grace imputed to a sinner. How many in this age, who neither know nor value Aristotle, do yet altogether follow his self-righteous notions of religion! These are congenial to our fallen nature; and are incapable, while they prevail in the mind, of administering any cure to papal bondage, except that which is worse than the disease itself. They tend to lead men into the depths of atheistic profaneness. But the person whom God raised up particularly at this time to instruct an ignorant world

was most remarkably eminent for self-knowledge. Only characters of this sort are qualified to inform mankind in subjects of the last importance towards the attainment of their eternal happiness. LUTHER knew himself; and he knew also the scriptural grounds on which he stood in his controversies with the ecclesiastical rulers. His zeal was disinterested, his courage undaunted. Accordingly, when he had once erected the standard of truth, he continued to uphold it with an unconquerable intrepidity, which merits the gratitude and esteem of all succeeding ages.

CHAPTER II.

Rise of the Controversy concerning Indulgences—Early History of Luther.

POPE Alexander VI., the most flagitious of men, died in the year 1505. After the short interval of the dominion of Pius III., who ruled the church less than a year, Julius II. was elected pontiff. A circumstance attended this election which deserves to be recorded as a memorable indication of the times. The cardinals agreed upon oath before the election, and obliged the new pontiff after his election to take the same oath, that a general council should be called within two years to reform the church. The effect of this measure, which so strongly implied the consent of the Christian world to the necessity of a reformation, was the council of Pisa. But nothing good was to be expected from Julius, a man, in the language of worldly greatness, renowned for military ambition. By his intrigues the council of Pisa was dissolved, and Julius died in 1513, after he had filled the Christian world with blood and confusion by his violence and rapacity.

Leo X., a man famous for the encouragement of letters and the fine arts, and deservedly celebrated among the patrons of learned men, succeeded. But historical veracity can admit scarcely any further encomium on his character.

He was a Florentine, of the illustrious house of the Medici,* and inherited the elegant taste and munificent spirit of that family. He was elected pope in the thirty-seventh year of his age. Though refined and humanized by his love of the liberal arts, and extremely abhorrent from the savage manners of Alexander and of Julius, he possessed other qualities no less inconsistent than theirs with the character of a pastor of the church of Christ. An excessive magnificence, a voluptuous indolence, and, above all, a total want of religious principle, rendered him perhaps more strikingly void of every sacerdotal qualification than any pontiff before him. He has been accused of open infidelity; but the proofs are said to be only negative: certainly, however, he at no time took the least pains to discover to mankind that he had a sincere reverence for religion. It was during the pontificate of this man that Providence gave the severest blow to the authority of the Roman hierarchy which it had ever received since the days of Gregory II.†

Both before his exaltation and after it, he opposed with dexterity and success the laudable attempts for a reformation which have been mentioned. A council called by this pope, and held in the Lateran palace, was directed under his auspices against the determinations of the council of Pisa. Afterward, in the year 1517, the university of Paris appealed from its decisions to a future general council. It is not necessary to enter into the detail of these transactions. They are here briefly mentioned for the purpose of showing, that common sense and the voice of natural conscience had agreed as to the necessity of a reformation, though men knew not the principles on which it ought to proceed. The greatest personages of the times had delivered their sentiments to the same effect. The existence of the distemper was admitted: the true remedy was unknown. That was to be drawn only from the word of God; and almost all parties were equally ignorant of the contents of the sacred volumes. In the same year, however, the spirit of Luther was raised up, to instruct the ignorant, to rouse

* He was the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, was ordained at the age of seven years, made an abbot before he was eight years old, and at the age of thirteen became a cardinal! Such were the practices of the times, and such the influence of his father in the court of Rome!

† vilith Century.

the negligent, and to oppose the scandalous practices of interested and ambitious ecclesiastical rulers.

No reformer had ever an opportunity more favourable to his designs. Such was the temerity of the existing hierarchy, that they might seem even to have purposely afforded to their opponents an advantage for the beginning of a contest, or rather to have been providentially infatuated. Leo X., after he had presided almost five years, having reduced himself to straits by his prodigal expenses of various kinds, and being desirous to complete the erection of St. Peter's church, begun at Rome by his predecessor Julius II., had recourse, after his example, to the sale of indulgences. These he published throughout the Christian world, granting freely to all who would pay money for the building of St. Peter's church, the license of eating eggs and cheese in the time of Lent! This is one of the many ridiculous circumstances which attended Leo's indulgences, and it is gravely related by the papal historians. The promulgation of these indulgences in Germany was committed to the brother of the Elector of Brandenburg, Albert archbishop of Mentz and of Magdeburg; who himself received a large share of the profits. Albert delegated the office to John Tetzel, a Dominican inquisitor, well qualified for an employment of this kind. He was a bold and enterprising monk, of uncommon impudence, who had already distinguished himself in similar transactions. Ten years before, we are told, he had collected at Friburg two thousand florins in the space of two days, by the sale of indulgences. "This frontless monk," says Mosheim, "executed his iniquitous commission not only with matchless insolence, indecency, and fraud, but even carried his impiety so far as to derogate from the all-sufficient power and influence of the merits of Christ." The people were made to believe, that the moment any person had paid the money for the indulgence he became certain of his salvation, and that the souls for whom the indulgences were bought were instantly released out of purgatory. Tetzel boasted, that he had saved more souls from hell by his indulgences than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching. He assured the purchasers of them, that their crimes, however enormous, would be forgiven; whence it became almost needless for him to bid them dismiss all fears concerning their salvation. With regard to the effect

of indulgences in delivering persons from the supposed torments of purgatory, the gross declarations of Tetzel in public are well known: "The moment the money tinkles in the chest, your father's soul mounts up out of purgatory." It does not appear that the rulers of the hierarchy ever found the least fault with Tetzel, as exceeding his commission, till an opposition was openly made to the practice of indulgences. Whence it is evident that the Protestants have not unjustly censured the corruptions of the court of Rome itself, in this respect, and not merely those of its agents. The indulgences were farmed to the best bidders, and the undertakers employed such deputies to carry on the traffic as they thought most likely to promote their lucrative views. The inferior officers concerned in this commerce were daily seen in public houses, enjoying themselves in riot and voluptuousness.* In fine, whatever the greatest enemy of popery could have wished was at that time exhibited with the most undisguised impudence and temerity, as if on purpose to render that wicked ecclesiastical system infamous before all mankind.†

Bishop Burnet informs us that the scandalous sale of pardons and indulgences had by no means so completely ceased in popish countries as is commonly taken for granted. He says, that in Spain and Portugal there is everywhere a commissary, who manages the sale with the most infamous circumstances imaginable. In Spain, the king, by an agree-

* Maimbourg.

† The following humorous story may seem scarcely worthy of the dignity of history; but it is recorded by the cautious Seckendorf, and may serve to show the almost incredible lengths to which the popish agents proceeded in their detestable traffic. When Tetzel was at Leipzig, and had scraped together a great deal of money from all ranks of people, a nobleman, who suspected the imposture, put this question to him, "Can you grant absolution for a sin which a man shall intend to commit in future?"—"Yes," replied the commissioner, "but on condition that the proper sum of money be actually paid down." The nobleman instantly produced the sum demanded; and in return received a diploma sealed and signed by Tetzel, absolving him from the unexplained crime which he secretly intended to commit. Not long after, when Tetzel was about to leave Leipzig, the nobleman made inquiry respecting the road he would probably travel, waited for him in ambush at a convenient place, attacked and robbed him, then beat him soundly with a stick, sent him back again to Leipzig with his chest empty, and at parting said, "This is the fault I intended to commit, and for which I have your absolution."

ment with the pope, has the profits. In Portugal the king and the pope divide them. "In the year 1709 the privateers of Bristol took a galleon, in which they found five hundred bales of bulls" for indulgences: "and sixteen reams were in a bale. So that they reckon the whole came to 3,840,000. These bulls are imposed on the people and sold, the lowest at three rials, a little more than twenty pence, but to some at about eleven pounds of our money.....All are obliged to buy them in Lent."*

Protestants in our times are not sufficiently aware of the evils from which, under the blessing of God, a great part of Europe has been delivered by the rational, animated, and persevering exertions of Luther, his associates, and other early reformers.

The prodigious sale of the indulgences published by Tetzel evinces both the profound ignorance of the age and also the power of superstitious fears, with which the consciences of men were then distressed. This, however, was the very situation of things which opened the way for the reception of the gospel. But who was to proclaim the gospel in its native beauty and simplicity? To answer this question was no easy task. The princes, the bishops, and the learned men of the times saw all this scandalous traffic respecting the pardon of sins; but none was found who possessed the knowledge, the courage, and the honesty necessary to detect the fraud, and to lay open to mankind the true doctrine of salvation by the remission of sins through Jesus Christ. But at length an obscure pastor appeared, who alone and without help began to erect the standard of sound religion. No man who believes that "the preparation of the heart is from the Lord" will doubt whether Martin Luther, in this great undertaking, was moved by the Spirit of God. This extraordinary person, at that time an Augustinian monk, was professor or lecturer in the university of Wittemberg, in Saxony. That academy was at once a college of students and a society of monks. Frederic the Wise, Elector of Saxony, ardently desirous of promoting literary knowledge, had added the former character to the latter, and always showed a steady regard to Luther on account of his skill and industry in advancing the reputation of that infant seminary

* Burnet, Hist. Ref. vol. iii., Introd.

of knowledge, which then was very low and abject both in its revenues and its exterior appearance. Luther preached also from time to time, and heard confessions. In the memorable year 1517, it happened that certain persons, repeating their confessions before him, and owning themselves to be atrocious offenders, yet refused to comply with the penances which he enjoined them, because they possessed diplomas of indulgence. Luther was struck with the absurdity of such conduct, and ventured to refuse them absolution. The persons thus rejected complained loudly to Tetzel, who was preaching in a town at no great distance. The Dominican inquisitor had not been accustomed to contradiction. He frowned and stormed, and menaced every one who dared to oppose him; and sometimes he ordered a pile of wood to be constructed and set on fire, for the purpose of striking terror into the minds of heretics. Luther was at that time only thirty-four years old, vigorous both in mind and body, fresh from the schools and fervent in the Scriptures. He saw crowds flock to Wittemberg and the neighbouring towns to purchase indulgences; and having no clear idea of the nature of that traffic, yet sensible of the obvious evils with which it must be attended, he began to signify in a gentle manner from the pulpit, that the people might be better employed than in running from place to place to procure indulgences. So cautiously did this great man begin a work, the consequences of which he then so little foresaw. He did not so much as know at that time who were the receivers of the money. In proof of this we find he wrote to Albert, Archbishop of Mentz, who, he understood, had appointed Tetzel to this employment, but with whose personal concern in the gains he was then unacquainted, entreating him to withdraw the license of Tetzel, and expressing his fears of the evils which would attend the sale of indulgences. He sent him likewise certain theses, which he had drawn up in the form of queries, concerning this subject. He expressed himself with the greatest caution and modesty. In fact, he saw enough to alarm a tender conscience, but he knew not where to fix the blame. He was not, as yet, fully satisfied in his own mind, either as to the extent of the growing mischief or the precise nature of its cause. In this state of doubt and anxiety he wrote also to other bishops, and par-

ticularly to his own diocesan, the Bishop of Brandenburg, with whom he was a particular favourite.

Nothing can be more orderly, candid, and open than this conduct of our reformer.* Zeal and charity were here united with the most perfect regard to ecclesiastical discipline. The Bishop of Brandenburg reverenced the integrity of Luther, while he was aware of the dangerous ground on which he was advancing. "You will oppose the church," he replied; "you cannot think in what troubles you will involve yourself; you had much better be silent and quiet." This was not language calculated to repress the firm and intrepid spirit of the Saxon monk; for, though by no means as yet a competent master of the points in debate, he saw they were of too great magnitude for a conscientious pastor to pass them by unnoticed. He knew too the manners of lower life, and could judge, far better than the bishops in general could do, of the mischievous consequences which were to be apprehended. With deliberate steadiness he ventured therefore to persevere; and having tried in vain to procure the concurrence of the dignitaries of the church, he published his Theses, ninety-five in number; which in fifteen days were spread throughout Germany. Their effect on the minds of men was rapid and powerful; though Tetzel, by threats, had silenced some pastors who had faintly opposed him, and though bishops and doctors, through fear of the flames, remained perfectly silent.

"Thus," says Luther (from whom much of the foregoing account is from his own words), "I was commended as an excellent doctor, who alone had the spirit to attempt so great an undertaking. But the fame which I had acquired was by no means agreeable to my mind; because I had then

* Du Pin, in conjunction with all the Roman Catholic writers, asserts that Luther's zeal for the interest of his own order led him to oppose the doctrine of indulgences. The best refutation of this calumny is to be derived from a fair statement of facts. The charge also, as brought by Hume, has received "a most complete answer" from Maclaine, in his notes on Mosheim.—*Milner.* The charge is now abandoned—*Sir J. Mackintosh.* It has been said likewise, that Staupitius, the vicar-general of Luther's order of monks, and also the Elector of Saxony, stimulated Luther to commence his opposition. But there is nowhere to be found the smallest proof of these assertions. The love of truth itself appears from his whole conduct to have influenced his measures: and the story needs only to be fairly told, in order to convince any candid person that this was the case

some doubts concerning the nature of indulgences, and because I feared that the task was beyond my powers and capacity."

But the real motives of Luther will be most surely discovered by a brief review of the manners and spirit of the man previously to his open declarations respecting indulgences. The Saxon reformer was born in the year 1483, at Eisleben, a town belonging to the county of Mansfeldt. His father wrought in the mines of Mansfeldt, which were at that time very famous; and after the birth of his son Martin, removed to that town, became a proprietor in the mines, discharged public offices there, and was esteemed by all men for his integrity. He gave a very liberal education to Martin, who was remarkable in general for dutiful affection to his parents, though in one instance, to be mentioned presently, he was led away by the superstition of the times, so as to offend his father exceedingly. After he had made great proficiency in his studies at Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt, he commenced master of arts in the latter university at the age of twenty. Having now finished his course of philosophy, he began to give close attention to the science of the civil law, and is said to have intended to advance himself by pleading at the bar: but he was diverted from his purpose by an accident. The barbarous murder of one of his most intimate friends had made a deep impression upon his mind; and soon after, while walking in the fields, under this impression, he was so much terrified by a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning,* as to form the sudden resolution of withdrawing

* Milner's narrative is here corrected from his Appendix. We will subjoin, from that Appendix, Melancthon's account of the circumstances which induced Luther, at an early age, to seclude himself in a monastery. "The immediate occasion of his commencing that course of life which he judged most adapted to sacred duties and the promotion of piety was this, as he himself told me, and as many persons well know. While he was deeply reflecting on the astonishing instances of the divine vengeance, so great alarm would suddenly affect his whole frame as almost to frighten him to death. I was once present, when, through intense exertion of mind in the course of an argument respecting some point of doctrine, he was so terrified as to retire to a neighbour's chamber, place himself on the bed, and pray aloud, frequently repeating these words, 'He hath concluded all under sin (in unbelief), that he might have mercy upon all.' Rom. xi. 32. These alarming agitations came upon him either for the first time, or certainly they were the severest, in that year when he lost an intimate companion, who was killed."

from the world, and throwing himself into the monastery at Erfurt. His father, a man of plain but sound understanding, strongly remonstrated. The son as strongly pleaded what he considered as a terrible call from Heaven to take upon himself the monastic vow. "Take care," replied the father, "that you are not ensnared by a delusion of the devil." But the mind of Martin was determined; and filial disobedience in such a case was looked on as a virtue. To the great grief and mortification of his father, he entered the monastery in the year 1505.

In one of his letters he owns, that from the very beginning of his monastic life he was constantly sad and dejected; and being unable to give peace to his mind, he at length opened his griefs to John Staupitius, or Staupitz, vicar-general of the Augustinian monks in Germany; a man highly esteemed by Frederic the Wise, and consulted by him particularly in things which concerned the university of Wittemberg. Staupitz himself appears to have had some serious views of religion, and a degree of knowledge at that time very uncommon. After Luther had explained to him the uneasy thoughts with which he was burdened, "You do not know," said he, "how useful and necessary this trial may be to you: God does not thus exercise you for nothing: you will one day see that he will employ you as his servant for great purposes." The event gave ample honour to the sagacity of Staupitz, and it is very evident that a deep and solid conviction of sin, leading the mind to the search of scriptural truth, and the investigation of the way of peace, was the mainspring of Luther's whole after-conduct. Indeed this view of our reformer's state of mind furnishes the only key to the discovery of the real motives by which he was influenced in his public transactions. Rash and prejudiced writers of the popish persuasion choose to represent him as having been under the dominion of avarice or ambition; but till they can produce some proofs beyond their own suspicions or bare affirmations, all such slanderous accusations must fall to the ground. In truth, no man was ever more free from avarice and ambition: the fear of God predominated to a very high degree in Luther's mind; and a nice sensibility of conscience, attended with an uncommon insight into the depth of our natural depravity, allowed him no rest. As yet he understood not the Scriptures; nor

felt that peace of God "which passeth understanding." He had too much light to sit down in slothful content and indifference, and too little to discern the rich treasures of the gospel, and to apply its healing promises to deep convictions of sin and misery. He remained for above a year, not only in constant anxiety and suspense, but in perpetual dread and alarm. All these things are abundantly evident, and beyond all contradiction, to those who are acquainted with his writings.

In the second year after Luther had entered into the monastery, he accidentally met with a Latin Bible in the library. It proved to him a treasure indeed. Then first he discovered that there were MORE Scripture passages extant than those which were read to the people! In reading the word of God with prayer his understanding was gradually enlightened, and he found some beams of evangelical comfort dart into his soul. The same year he was refreshed in his sickness by the discourse of an old monk, who showed him that remission of sins was to be apprehended by faith alone, and referred him to a passage in Bernard's* sermon on the annunciation, where the same doctrine was taught. With incredible ardour he now gave himself up to the study of the Scriptures and the books of Augustine: till he at length came to be regarded as the most ingenious and learned man of his order in Germany. But the soul of Luther was constantly panting for something very different from secular glory.

In the year 1507 he was ordained; and the next year was called by Staupitz to the professorship at Wittemberg, where a theatre was opened for the display of his talents both as a teacher of philosophy and as a popular preacher. He excelled in both capacities. Eloquent by nature, and powerful in moving the affections, acquainted also in a very uncommon degree with the elegances and energy of his native tongue, he became the wonder of his age. These things are allowed very liberally by his enemies; but it ought to be observed, that the exercises of his own mind, by which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was led more and more into Christian truth, would naturally add a strength to his oratory, unattainable by those who speak not

* A devout and celebrated writer of the xiith century.

from the heart. Martin Polichius, a doctor of law and medicine, exclaimed, "This monk will confound all the doctors, will exhibit new doctrine, and reform the whole Roman church; for he is intent on reading the writings of the prophets and apostles, and he depends on the word of Jesus Christ: this neither the philosophers nor the sophists can subvert." He who spake thus was himself looked upon as a prodigy of wisdom; but a degree of discernment less than his might have shown an attentive observer that the didactic plan of Luther was that of an original thinker, who was not likely to confine himself to the beaten track, but to produce something new to mankind. Nor does it seem at all improbable that, if Luther had followed merely the dictates of his own adventurous genius, he might have been the inventor of some novel theological schemes and doctrines. But all tendency to fanciful excursions in the important concerns of religion was effectually restrained and chastised in the mind of our reformer by his profound reverence for the written Word. Moreover, from his first entrance into the monastery, he appears to have been "taught of God," and to have been led more and more into such discoveries of native depravity as render a man low in his own eyes, and dispose him to receive the genuine gospel of Christ.

In the year 1510 he was sent to Rome on some business which related to his own monastery; and he discharged his mission with so much ability and success, that on his return he was compelled by the vicar-general to assume the degree of doctor of divinity. He writes that he did this with great reluctance, and entirely from obedience to his superiors. It is easy indeed for a man to say this; but from the mouth of Luther, it is with me decisive of its truth; for veracity and integrity do evidently appear to have remarkably entered into his character. The expenses attending his degree were defrayed by his sovereign, the Elector of Saxony. While at Rome he had discovered somewhat of the singularity of his character, which had attracted the attention of the Italian priests. The external rites of religion, which to them were matter of political formality, with him were serious exercises. While they hurried over the ceremonies of the mass, he performed them with a solemnity and devotion which excited their ridicule; and they bade him repeat them with more rapidity. The consequence was he returned to his monastery

more fully convinced than ever that Rome was not the scene in which a serious pastor could properly learn even the rudiments of religion. He studied and taught the Scriptures with increasing ardour and alacrity, and from the period of his being created a doctor of divinity conscientiously devoted his time and talents to the sacred office. In the year 1512 he expounded the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans, to the great satisfaction of his audience. He studied the Hebrew and Greek languages, and highly valued the philological labours of Erasmus of Rotterdam, the renowned reviver of classical literature: but while he concurred with that great man in his contempt of monastic trifles, he was intensely studious to learn better and more scriptural notions of God and his attributes than those which Erasmus so ingeniously satirized. Already he was suspected of heresy, because of his dislike of the scholastic doctrines.

In 1516, he thus wrote to a friend: "I desire to know what your soul is doing: whether, wearied at length of its own righteousness, it learns to refresh itself and to rest in the righteousness of Christ. The temptation of presumption in our age is strong in many, and specially in those who labour to be just and good with all their might, and at the same time are ignorant of the righteousness of God, which in Christ is conferred upon us with a rich exuberance of gratuitous liberality. They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have a confidence of standing before God, adorned with virtues and merits; which is an impossible attempt. You, my friend, used to be of this opinion, or rather this mistake: so was I; but now I am fighting against the error, but have not yet prevailed."

This interesting and instructing letter demonstrates what was the religious state of his mind at that time. He had received the grace of Christ, and knew the true and only way of salvation; though, in his own eyes at least, he was weak in the faith. He both felt and preached the fundamentals of the gospel, before he appeared in the field against popery: and if he had not been absolutely persecuted into a secession, such was his modesty and love of peace and order, and so little had he then studied the particular corruptions of the hierarchy, that he would, in all probability, have continued to his death an obedient son of the Roman church. The methods of Providence were, however, ad-

mirable in conducting Luther into the depths of a controversy to which he seems to have had no inclination. Indulgences were preached, and he saw the evil of them in a practical, rather than a theoretical light, and was thence drawn undesignedly into a contest, the effects of which were salutary to so many nations. Those who apprehend that when he began the contest he was ignorant of the nature of the gospel, appear not to have known the order and method in which the mind of the Saxon reformer was conducted into religious truth.

In the same year he was appointed, during the absence of Staupitz, subaltern vicar; by which office he was authorized to visit about forty monasteries, in Misnia and Thuringia. Returning to Wittemberg, in June, he wrote to Spalatinus, who was at once the secretary, the chaplain, and the counsellor of the elector, and always showed himself a steady friend of Luther, in terms which expressed the frank effusions of his own heart, on a review of the state of religion in the country, which the visitation had given him an opportunity of accurately observing. "Many things please your prince, and look great in his eyes, which are displeasing to God. In secular wisdom, I confess that he is, of all men, most knowing; but in things pertaining to God, and relating to the salvation of souls, I must own that he is blind sevenfold." This was the true character of Frederic at that time, though he was justly esteemed the wisest prince of the age, and was sincerely and ingenuously desirous of promoting religion and virtue. In fact, his good understanding was oppressed with a heavy load of the most pitiable superstitions. He was, however, by no means displeased with Luther for using freedom of speech; and there is reason to believe, that afterward he learned more of the true nature of the gospel, though by very slow degrees.

In the October of the same year, Luther communicated to his learned friend Spalatinus his thoughts concerning certain of the Fathers, and also concerning Erasmus's method of interpreting Scripture. This memorable epistle deserves particular attention, not only for its judicious observations on the comparative merits of theologians of different periods, but for the evidence it affords of the progress which the writer had, at this time, made in divine knowledge. "That which strikes my mind in considering

Erasmus," he says, "is this: In interpreting the apostle's account of the righteousness of works, or of the law, he understands by these terms ceremonial observances only. In the next place, though he admits the doctrine of original sin, he will not allow that the apostle speaks of it in the fifth chapter of Romans. Now, if he had carefully read Augustine's anti-Pelagian tracts, especially his account of 'the spirit and the letter,' of 'the guilt of sin and the remission of it;' and had observed how *he* speaks in perfect unison with the best of the Fathers, from Cyprian to Ambrose, he might have better understood the apostle Paul, and also have conceived more highly of Augustine as an expositor than he has hitherto done. In dissenting from Erasmus's judgment in this point, I must frankly declare that I as much prefer Augustine's expositions to those of Jerome, as he prefers those of Jerome to Augustine's.... The righteousness of the law is by no means confined to ceremonies; for, though it includes these, it still more directly respects an obedience to the whole decalogue; which obedience, when it takes place to a certain degree, and yet has not Christ for its foundation, though it may produce such men as Fabricius and Regulus, that is, very upright moralists, according to man's judgment, has nothing in it of the nature of genuine righteousness. *For men are not made truly righteous*, as Aristotle supposes, *by performing certain actions which are externally good*—for they may still be counterfeit characters—*but men must have righteous principles in the first place, and then they will not fail to perform righteous actions.** God first respects Abel, and then his

* Sir James Mackintosh, who, in his History of England (first chapter on the Reformation), presents very much the same view of Luther's character and early proceedings, as that here given, quotes this sentence from Milner's History, and pronounces upon it the following splendid eulogium. "The enormities of Tetzel found Luther busied in the contemplation of the principle"—that now before us—"which is the basis of all ethical judgment.... The general terms here used enunciate a proposition equally certain and sublime; the basis of all pure ethics, the cement of the eternal alliance between morality and religion, and the badge of the independence of both on the low motives and dim insight of human laws.... Luther saw the pure moral principle in its religious form; but his words enounce it as it exists in itself, independent of all application.... From the promulgation of this principle, therefore, may be dated the downfall of superstition, which is founded on commutations, compromises, exchanges, substitutes for a pure mind, fatal to morality; and upon the exaggerated estimate of practices, more or less useful, but never beneficial otherwise than as *means*."—J. S.

offering. I beg you will put Erasmus in mind of these things. In so doing, you will discharge the duties of both a friend and a Christian."

A little before the controversy concerning indulgences, George duke of Saxony entreated Staupitz to send him some learned and worthy preacher. The vicar-general despatched Luther, with strong recommendations, to Dresden. George gave him an order to preach. Luther's sermon turned directly upon the doctrine of free salvation by Jesus Christ, and the comfort which it brings to the mind that was trembling under the sense of its unworthiness, and tempted to fly from God, who ought to be our sovereign refuge. An honourable matron, who had heard Luther, was asked by the duke at dinner how she liked the discourse. "I should die in peace," she said, "if I could hear such another sermon." The duke, in much anger, replied, "I would give a large sum of money that a sermon of this sort, which encourages men in a licentious course of life, had never been preached." Within the space of a month, the lady was confined to bed by sickness, and soon after died, rejoicing in her prospects of future glory. But from that time Luther came no more to Dresden. That capital of modern Saxony was then part of the dukedom of George, who proved one of the most virulent enemies of the reformation. He was uncle to the elector Frederic. Like pharisaic formalists in all ages, he perversely misconstrued, as of licentious tendency, the true doctrine of the gospel which Luther preached, and which alone enables humble and repenting souls to serve God with lively faith and cheerful hope.

How precious this doctrine must have been to the mind of Luther himself may be conceived from a well authenticated incident, which evinces the state of mental bondage in which he had been held. Having for many days neglected, through the intenseness of his studies, to recite the canonical hours, he, in compliance with the pope's decrees, and to satisfy his conscience, actually shut himself up in his closet, and recited them for all the times that he had omitted them, with punctilious exactness, and with such severe attention and abstinence as reduced his strength exceedingly, brought on a nearly total want of sleep for the space of five weeks, and almost produced symptoms of a

weakened intellect. Is it to be wondered at, that he, who at length found relief and liberty by the grace of Christ, should be zealous to preach the mystery of the Cross to his fellow-creatures?*

We have now laid before the curious reader some interesting particulars of the private life of Luther, previous to his assumption of that public character which has made his name immortal. The serious Christian will adore the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, which, by preparatory exercises of soul, had directed this extraordinary personage into the true light and liberty of the gospel of Christ, and fitted him for the great work to which he was called.

There are two points concerning Luther on which all the most respectable, even of the papal party, unanimously concur in their testimony. The one is, that his learning, genius, and capacity were of the first magnitude; the other, that his life was without blemish. Any thing that may appear contrary to this will be found on examination to be mere scandalous surmise, unsupported by facts. Far be it, however, from the historian's design to insinuate that there were no faults or defects in the character which he so much admires. Besides the incessant ebullitions of native depravity (in the confession of which no man was ever more earnest than Luther), all real Christians, not excepting even the most eminent saints, have their infirmities and their faults, which cost them much inward pain and sorrow. But the very candid and accurate memorialist Seckendorf defies all the adversaries of Luther to fix any just censure on his character, except what may be ranked under two heads; namely, a disposition to anger, and an indulgence in jesting. Beyond all doubt, the Saxon reformer was of a choleric temper, and he too often gave way to this constitutional evil, as he himself bitterly laments. Neither is it to be denied that he too much encouraged his natural propensity to facetiousness. The monks of his time were in general

* Milner here subjoins, in an Appendix, the substance of Melancthon's Sketch of Luther's Life, entirely agreeing with the account above given. We add from it the following notice. "As he was neither a little nor a weak man, I have often been astonished to observe how little meat or drink he seemed to require. I have seen him, when he was in perfect health, absolutely neither eat nor drink during four days together; at other times, I have seen him for many days content with the slight allowance of a very little bread and a herring on each day."

guilty of this fault, and often to so great a degree as very improperly to mix scurrilities with sacred subjects. Moreover, the vices and the follies of those whom Luther opposed afforded a strong temptation to a spirit of both anger and ridicule. Yet, after all that can be said in mitigation, it must be owned that *a reformer* ought to have considered, not so much what they deserved, as what became the character he had to support; namely, that of a serious Christian, zealous for the honour of his God, displeased with the vices of his clerical brethren, and grieved on account of the pitiable ignorance of the people; yet more desirous of curing the prevailing evils than of exposing them.

These unhappy blemishes in Luther doubtless appear much more offensive to us than they did in his own time among men of ruder manners, accustomed to a greater freedom both of action and of expression in their mutual intercourse. They form the darkest shades in his writings, which in all other respects are truly admirable. One cannot but feel both some surprise and regret, that this great and good man should have failed, in so considerable a degree, to imitate his favourite author: for a uniform spirit of meekness is the singular excellence which adorns the page of Augustine.*

The defects which we have mentioned were too considerable to be passed over in silence; and, having now dis-

* In a subsequent part of the history, Dr. Milner adds the following just and valuable remarks upon the same subject. "In ages of greater refinement indeed, whether men are conscious of defeat or of victory, they are more accustomed to abstain from gross and indecent language; yet even then, in its place, there is often manifested on the one hand an affectation of coolness and indifference, and perhaps an attempt at strokes of irony, which sufficiently bespeak the wounded spirit of the vanquished; and, on the other, an insolent and contemptuous sort of clemency, which, as it originates in the pride and palpable superiority of the conqueror, proves more hurtful to the feelings of an antagonist than could any hard words or disgusting allusions. If Martin Luther had lived in our times, and had not learned, through the influence of the precious doctrine which he taught, to bridle and regulate better his disposition to resentment, yet would he probably have managed his replies and rejoinders with a more decorous disguise: but it does not thence follow, that he would either have experienced less turbulence of passion in his own mind, or have produced less painful sensations in the minds of his adversaries; though these might have been less obvious, because designedly more concealed. The internal heat and fury of a combustion, when confined by powerful obstacles, is not to be estimated by the little blaze and smoke which affect the senses."

charged the duty of an impartial historian, we leave it to the judicious reader himself to appreciate their just operation in lessening his esteem and veneration for this extraordinary personage. In contemplating the other qualities and endowments of our reformer, we have no hesitation in affirming that it is not easy to find a more excellent character. No man since the apostles' days had penetrated into the sacred oracles with such singular felicity. He was endowed with a greatness of soul far beyond the common lot of men: dangerous gift in a fallen creature! Yet his bold and adventurous spirit never appears in any one instance to have made the smallest encroachment on the most perfect integrity. Humane, generous, and placable, he was rarely diverted from the path of equity; and, notwithstanding the uncommon vehemence of his temper, he was often submissive and condescending. With an exquisite sensibility and readiness of conception, with a zeal and an imagination which never remitted their ardour for a single moment, he was most perfectly free from enthusiasm: and, with a great capacity and unparalleled intrepidity, he seems to have been devoid of ambition, and contented to live all his days in very moderate circumstances. Only the Wise Disposer of all events, for the glory of his own name, and for the revival of true religion in Europe, could, by the effectual operation of his Holy Spirit, have produced, at the season when most wanted, so faithful a champion; one possessed of so much vigour of intellect, of so daring a spirit, and of so truly humble and Christian a temper.

Such was the illustrious Luther, when he was called forth by Divine Providence to enter the lists, alone and without one assured ally, against the hosts of the pretended successor of St. Peter, who was then domineering over the Christian world in all his grandeur and plenitude of power.

It would be easy here to collect the most striking testimonies to the talents, the learning, the great qualities, and the blameless morals of the reformer, even from those who considered him as a detestable heretic, and who intermingle with their testimonies the most malicious comments as to the motives by which he was actuated.* But it shall suf-

* Milner (iv. 337–342) has, in fact, collected such testimonies from Maimbourg, Varillas, Moreri, and Bayle: the three former popish his-

fice to give a few sentences from Erasmus; who, though not to be numbered with the writers just referred to, certainly was never very fond of Luther, and, becoming at length involved in controversy with him, often spoke of him and his adherents with great bitterness.

In one of his epistles, Erasmus even expresses his belief "that God had sent Luther to reform mankind." Melancthon, in his narrative concerning Luther, assures us from his own knowledge, that the Elector of Saxony besought Erasmus, in the very kindest manner, to tell him freely, whether he judged Luther to be mistaken respecting the principal controversies in which he was then engaged; and that Erasmus on this occasion spoke out, "That Luther's sentiments were true, but that he wished to see more mildness in his manner." In one of his letters he says, "The cause of Luther is invidious, because he at once attacks the bellies of the monks and the diadem of the pope"—the emoluments of the one and the power of the other. In various other letters, and particularly in one written to Cardinal Campeggio, in the year 1520, Erasmus opens his mind freely concerning Luther and his proceedings. He acknowledges that he possessed great natural talents; and that he had a genius particularly adapted to the explanation of difficult points of literature, and for rekindling the sparks of genuine evangelical doctrine, which were almost extinguished by the trifling subtilties of the schools. He adds, that men of the very best character, of the soundest learning, and of the most religious principles, were much pleased with Luther's books: and even that, in proportion as any person was remarkable for upright morals and evangelical purity, he had the less objection to Luther's sentiments. "Besides," said he, "the life of the man is extolled, even by those who cannot bear his doctrines. Some, indeed, in hatred to his person, condemn what is true, pervert and misinterpret what is right, and make him pass for a heretic, for saying the same things which they allow to have been pious and orthodox in Bernard and Augustine." Erasmus

torians, the last an infidel or skeptic—who has, however, very usefully employed his minute knowledge of the history and biography of the time to the exposure of various slanders maliciously propagated against the reformers.

declares that he had endeavoured, to the utmost of his power, to hinder Luther from being oppressed by a faction of raging zealots. It grieved him that a man of such fine parts should be rendered desperate by the mad cries and bellowings of the monks. "We ought," continued this sagacious writer, "to take notice of the source and spring of all this evil. The world is burdened with human inventions in the business of religion, loaded with the opinions and doctrines of the schools, and oppressed with the tyranny of the monks and begging friars. I do not condemn them all, but many of them are so mad, that for the sake of interest and rule they hamper the consciences of men on purpose. They lay aside Christ and modesty: they preach nothing but their own innovations, and oftentimes scandalous doctrines. They speak of indulgences in such a manner as is insupportable even to the laity. By these and such like methods, the power of the gospel has dwindled to nothing; and it is to be feared, that, matters becoming continually worse, the little spark of Christian piety by which the stifled spirit of charity might be rekindled will be entirely quenched. The chief parts of religion are lost in ceremonies more than Judaical. Good men lament and weep for these things; and even divines who are not monks acknowledge the truth of them; as also some of the monks in their private conversations. These things, I believe, first put Luther upon the dangerous work of opposing some of the most intolerable and shameless abuses. For what can we think otherwise of a person who neither aims at worldly honour or riches? I do not now consider the charges which they bring against the man; I speak only of the apparent grounds of their animosity towards him. Luther had the boldness to call in question the good of indulgences; but others had first spoken too much and too boldly for them. Luther has dared to speak indecently of the power of the pope of Rome; but others had first exalted it too indecently. He dared to despise the decrees of Thomas Aquinas; but the Dominicans had extolled them almost above the gospel. He dared to disclose some doubts in the matter of confession; but the monks continually perplexed the consciences of men upon that head. He dared to reject the conclusions of the schools in part; but others ascribed too much to them, and yet disagreed with

them as well as he; altering them often, and introducing new notions in the place of those they abolished. It was matter of grief to pious minds to hear almost nothing said in the schools of the doctrines of the gospel, and that in the sermons little mention was made of Christ, but much of papal power, and of the opinions of recent writers. Luther has written a great deal that savours more of imprudence than of irreligion. But the greatest offence he has given is his want of respect to Thomas Aquinas; his lessening the profits of indulgences; his despising the mendicant friars; his preferring the gospel to the doctrines of the schools; his opposing the sophistries of disputants: all these are intolerable heresies."

As we trust that the true character of the Saxon reformer, in regard to his motives, abilities, and learning, is now fully ascertained, we return to the narrative of the progress of the dispute concerning the sale of indulgences.*

CHAPTER III.

Progress of the Controversy concerning Indulgences—Conferences between Luther and Cajetan.

TETZEL, who, as has been already observed, was no novice in the traffic of indulgences, alarmed at the publication of Luther's Theses, opposed to them one hundred and six Propositions, in which he attempted to refute the arguments of the Augustinian monk; and not content with this, by virtue of his inquisitorial authority, he also directed Luther's compositions to be burned. This so much in-

* Had it been consonant to our purpose here to cite the testimonies of friends, that of Melancthon must not have been omitted. "Pomeranus" (Bugenhagen), says he, "is a grammarian, and explains the force of words; I profess logic, and teach both the arrangement of the matter and the nature of argumentation; Justus Jonas is an orator, and discourses with copiousness and elegance; but Luther is OMNIA IN OMNIBUS, complete in every thing; a very miracle among men; whatever he says, whatever he writes, penetrates their minds, and leaves the most astonishing stings in their hearts."

caused the minds of Luther's disciples at Wittemberg, that they ventured, by way of retaliation, to burn publicly Tetzel's Propositions, with every mark of disapprobation and ignominy. Luther was much grieved at this rash action; and finding himself to be accused of instigating his followers to it, he wrote thus to a friend: "I wonder you could believe that I was the author of the deed. Think you that I am so destitute of common sense as to stigmatize, in such a manner, a person in so high an office? I know better the rules of ecclesiastical subordination, and have more regard to my own character, both as a monk and as a theologian, than to act so." There were also persons who, pretending to be in possession of court intrigues, were fond of circulating the report that Luther had published his Theses by the secret instigation of the elector. Luther, with great concern, noticed the false surmise in a letter to Spalatinus, regretting that the prince should incur any odium on his account.

About the same time he published a sermon preached against indulgences, which Tetzel answered; and this produced a reply from Luther. Henry duke of Brunswick, who was afterward distinguished among the most active enemies of Lutheranism, now appeared in the contest; and in a public writing accused Frederic of secretly supporting Luther. The well known character of the elector for caution and prudence seems, however, to have prevented the report from gaining much credit. This prince took extraordinary care not to involve himself unnecessarily in the concerns of Luther. In all his opposition to Tetzel, our intrepid reformer most certainly had no colleague or assistant; and he himself declared, that he never had conversed with the Elector Frederic in his whole life.

Luther never did things by halves. Accordingly, as the impious traffic in indulgences had laid firm hold on his mind, he could neither quiet his uneasiness nor smother his indignation. He still continued to preach and to write on the same subject, till the end of the year 1517. In the next year he was called, by some business belonging to his order, to Heidelberg, and was courteously received there by Wolfgang, the brother of the Elector Palatine, who was the scholar of Œcolampadius, a name afterward renowned among the Swiss reformers. While he remained at this

place, he wrote and publicly defended some propositions opposed to the prevailing notions concerning justification, faith, and works. His capital object in them was to demonstrate the doctrine of justification before God by faith, and not by our works and deservings. A large concourse of people attended, and a number of the learned bore a part in the disputation. Among the hearers were Martin Bucer and John Brentius, men afterward eminent in the work of reformation. These and other persons, who in process of time became celebrated theologians, admired the acuteness, promptitude, and meekness of Luther; were struck with the truths of the gospel, which were new to their ears, and desired further instruction of him in private. This was the seedtime of the gospel in the Palatinate, and these were the beginnings of the reformation in that electorate. Luther's disciples cultivated and taught the same doctrines in private, and after a time ventured to teach them publicly in the university.

While the cause of evangelical truth was thus making gradual advances in Germany, two celebrated Romanists, Eckius of Ingolstadt, and Prierias, a Dominican, "master of the sacred palace" at Rome, took up their pens against the Theses of Luther, who by these means was led into fresh literary contests. He published elaborate answers on all the disputed points, and managed this part of the controversy with so much moderation and gentleness, that his inimical historian, Maimbourg, has no way left of reviling the man he dislikes but by saying, "On this occasion he acted contrary to his natural disposition." At this time he wrote also to his own diocesan, and to his vicar-general. To the former (the Bishop of Brandenburg) he declared, that he did not DETERMINE but DISCUSS, using the liberty allowed to scholastic men in all ages. "I fear not," says he, "bulls and menaces; it is the audaciousness and the ignorance of men that induce me to stand forth, though with much reluctance: were there not a weighty cause for it, no one out of my own little sphere should ever hear of me. If the cause I defend be not the work of God, I would have nothing to do with it; let it perish. Let him alone have glory to whom alone glory belongs." The spirit of his vicar-general he endeavoured thus to arouse: "When I first heard you say, 'that true repentance begins with a love

of righteousness and of God,' the words made a deep and durable impression on my heart, as if they had come by a voice directly from heaven." Hence he was filled with grief to see the true doctrine of repentance superseded by indulgences. He expressed his great unwillingness to be drawn into the contest; but, being defamed as an enemy of the pope, he felt himself constrained to defend his own character. He therefore begged Staupitz to transmit "his trifling writings" to Pope Leo X., that they might speak for him at Rome. "Not," says he, "that I would involve YOU in my dangers. I desire alone to stand the shock of the contest. Let Christ see to it, whether the cause be mine or his. To the kind admonitions of my friends, who would warn me of danger, my answer is, 'The poor man has no fears.' I protest, that property, reputation, and honours shall all be of no estimation with me, compared with the defence of truth. I have only a frail body to lose, and that weighed down with constant fatigue. If, in obedience to God, I lose it through violence or fraud, what is the loss of a few hours of life? Sufficient for me is the lovely Redeemer and Advocate, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whose praise I will sing as long as I live."

His controversial writings, published in the year 1518, in explanation and support of the various doctrines he had advanced, are full of important matter, and very much lay open the real state of his mind at that time. And these writings also, such was his regard for ecclesiastical discipline, he thought proper to transmit both to his ordinary and to his vicar-general. Among many other positions maintained in them are the following: "Every true Christian may become partaker of the grace of Christ without pontifical indulgences.—A Christian may glory that in Christ he has all things; that all the righteousness and merits of Christ are his own, by virtue of that spiritual union with him which he has by faith: and on the other hand, that all his sins are no longer his, but that Christ, through the same union, bears the burden of them. And this is the confidence of Christians, this is the refreshment of their consciences, that by faith our sins cease to be ours judicially, because they are laid on him, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

"I was compelled," continues Luther, "in my conscience

to expose the scandalous sale of indulgences. I saw some seduced by them into mischievous errors, others tempted into an audacious profaneness. In a word, the proclaiming and selling of pardons proceeded to such an unbounded licentiousness, that the holy church and its authorities became subjects of open derision in the public taverns. There was no occasion to excite the hatred of mankind against priests to a greater degree. The avarice and profligacy of the clergy had, for many years past, kindled the indignation of the laity. Alas! the latter have not a particle of respect or honour for the priesthood, except what arises solely from fear of punishment: and, I speak plainly, unless their dislike and their objections be attended to and moderated, not by mere power, but by substantial reasons and reformations, all these evils will grow worse."

He even wrote a letter to the pope himself respecting the same transactions, in which he expresses himself in so dutiful and ceremonious a manner, nay, in strains of such submissive and prostrate subjection, as sufficiently show that at that time he was far from meditating a separation from the church of Rome.

The preceding detail of facts and observations unavoidably leads the mind to the following conclusions: Luther was far advanced in evangelical knowledge, and appears to have been an experienced Christian some time before he became known to the world. Yet was he still strongly wedded to the habits of superstition; and he slowly admitted the conviction of the antichristian character of the hierarchy. He dreaded the sin of schism; and the impetuous fire of his temper was perpetually checked by the admonitions of conscience, and by the fear of offending his Maker. In this singular character there was certainly united an assemblage of qualities rarely found together in the same person: in particular, the greatest caution in conduct with a temper remarkably ardent and choleric. Too often this temper betrayed him into a blameable asperity of language, yet seldom does it seem to have influenced his measures or plans of action. The poet's simple but sublime description of one of his dramatic heroes is eminently true of the Saxon theologian—"He feared God, and he feared none beside."*

* Racine, in his Athaliah.

Whoever keeps in view the natural and religious dispositions of Luther, while he contemplates his critical situation during the suspense of his contest with the papal authorities, cannot fail to conclude that he must have experienced great anxiety and even perturbation of mind in that memorable season. The precise nature of his feelings will be best understood from his own account of them, in a preface to the edition of his Theses which was published by himself many years after the termination of the dispute. "I permit," says he, "the republication of my propositions against indulgences for this reason, that the greatness of the success may be attributed to God, and that I may not be exalted in mine own eyes. For by these propositions it will appear how weak and contemptible I was, and in how fluctuating a state of mind when I began this business. I found myself involved in it alone, and as it were by surprise. And when it became impossible for me to retreat, I made many concessions to the pope, not however in many important points; but certainly at that time I adored him in earnest. In fact, how despised and wretched a monk was I then—more like a lifeless body than a human being! Whereas, in regard to the pope, how great was his majesty! The potentates of the earth dreaded his nod. How distressed my heart was in that year, 1517, and the following; how submissive my mind was to the hierarchy, not feignedly but really;* nay, how I was almost driven to despair, through the agitations of care, and fear, and doubt, those secure spirits little know who at this day insult the majesty of the pope with much pride and arrogance! But I, who then alone sustained the danger, was not so certain, not so confident. I was ignorant of many things which now, by the grace of God, I understand. I disputed, and I was open to conviction. Not finding satisfaction in the books of theologians and canonists, I wished to consult the living members of the church itself. There were indeed some godly souls who entirely approved my propositions, but I did not consider their authority as of weight with me in spiritual concerns. The popes, cardinals, bishops, and monks were

* Even Maimbourg is disposed to admit the sincerity of his professions of this kind, observing, "It was so contrary to his nature to play the hypocrite for any considerable time together." In Milner, iv. 354, 355.

the objects of my confidence. I waited for Divine instruction with such ardent and continued eagerness, and was so overloaded with cares, that I became almost stupid or distracted: I scarcely knew when I was asleep and when awake. At length, after I had become able to answer every objection that could be brought against me from the Scriptures, one difficulty still remained, and only one; namely, that the CHURCH ought to be obeyed. By the grace of Christ I at last overcame this difficulty also. Most certainly I had formerly a much greater veneration for the Roman church than those have who, at this day, with a perverse spirit of opposition, extol popery so exceedingly against me."

Let us now listen to a few sentences of Luther's, written so late as the year 1545—twenty-eight years after the beginning of the dispute concerning indulgences. "Before all things, I entreat you, pious reader, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to read my writings with cool consideration, and even with much pity. I wish you to know, that when I began the affair of indulgences at the very first, I was a monk, and a most mad papist. So intoxicated was I, and drenched in papal dogmas, that I would have been most ready at all times to murder, or assist others in murdering, any person who should have uttered a syllable against the duty of obedience to the pope. I was a complete Saul; and there are many such yet. There were, however, and are now, others, who appear to me to adhere to the pope on the principles of Epicurus; that is, for the sake of indulging their appetites; when secretly they even deride him, and are as cold as ice if called upon to defend the papacy. I was never one of these; I was always a sincere believer; I was always earnest in defending the doctrines I professed; I went seriously to work, as one who had a horrible dread of the day of judgment, and who, from his inmost soul, was anxious for salvation. You will find, therefore, in my earlier writings, with how much humility, on many occasions, I gave up very considerable points to the pope, which I now detest as blasphemous and abominable in the highest degree. This ERROR my slanderers call INCONSISTENCY: but you, pious reader, will have the kindness to make some allowance on account of the times and of my inexperience. I stood absolutely alone at first; and certainly I was unin-

structed, and very unfit to undertake matters of such vast importance. It was by accident, not willingly or by design, that I fell into these violent disputes: I call God to witness! I felt assured I should have the pope on my side respecting the sale of indulgences; for he himself, in his public decrees, had condemned the excesses of his agents in that business. My next step was to complain to my own ordinary, and also to the Archbishop of Mentz. I knew not at that time that half of the money went to this last-mentioned prelate, and the other half to the pope! The remonstrances of a low, mean, poor brother in Christ had no weight. Thus despised, I published a brief account of the dispute, along with a sermon, in the German language, on the subject of indulgences; and very soon after I published also explanations of my sentiments, in which, for the honour of the pope, I contended that indulgences were not entirely to be condemned, but that real works of charity were of far more consequence. This was to set the world on fire, and disturb the whole order of the universe. At once, and against me single, the whole popedom arose!!"*

A more complete answer to the unwarrantable censures of those who accuse Luther of selfish motives in promoting the reformation can scarcely be conceived. But, after all, the best use to be made of the information here given is to admire and adore the providence and grace of that God "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."

While the literary contest was carrying on between Luther and his antagonists, there were at Rome those who blamed the pope for not interesting himself in a controversy which, by exciting a spirit of resistance, and producing divisions, daily increased in magnitude and importance, and which, in its termination, might prove extremely injurious to the authority of the Romish church. With how much indifference and contempt Leo X. at first beheld the ecclesiastical disputes in Germany, how indolent was the disposition of this pontiff, and how improvident he showed himself in defending the papal jurisdiction, appears in the strongest light from the absurd and careless answer which he is said to have given to Prierias, when that zealous and learned Do-

* Pref. to vol. i. of Luther's Works.

minican showed him some of Luther's heretical publications concerning indulgences. "BROTHER MARTIN," said he, "IS A MAN OF VERY FINE GENIUS, and these squabbles are the mere effusions of monastic envy." Prierias, however, undertook the support of the pontifical authority; but in writing against the reformer he managed the Romish cause with so much heat and imprudence that the pope himself presently directed him to be silent in future.

In the same year, 1518, a rash author of a similar description attacked Luther with all the virulence of an enraged and bigoted Romanist. This was Hogostrat, a German Dominican inquisitor, who represented the growing heresy as now become incurable by any of the milder methods. Penal and compulsory remedies he said were absolutely necessary; and he exhorted the pontiff, by means of the sword and fire, to deliver mankind from the detestable innovator. Many of the monks joined in this clamour with incessant vociferation among the people. Scarcely a word came from their mouth except Heresy! Blasphemy! Schism! "I relate," says Erasmus, "what I saw with my own eyes; and I am convinced that no one thing tended more to dispose the people in Luther's favour than this imprudent conduct of the clergy. HIS propositions concerning the indulgences were soberly stated; and if THEY had but argued the points in dispute in the same cool way, these ruinous consequences would never have taken place."

At length the Roman pontiff was roused from his state of indolence and security. Not only the avaricious venders of indulgences vociferated against Luther, as Demetrius and the silversmiths did against St. Paul when their craft was in danger, but from all quarters complaints of the progress of heresy were sent to Rome. Even the Emperor Maximilian I. represented to the pope how necessary his interference was become. The imprudence of Leo X. at this critical moment may seem almost the consequence of judicial infatuation. At once he passed from the extremes of neglect and indifference to those of tyrannical violence and blind temerity. He ordered Luther to appear at Rome within sixty days, to answer for himself before certain judges, of whom his antagonist Prierias was one! Our reformer took the wisest method to protect himself against the impending storm. He instantly informed his friend Spalatinus, who

was then with the elector at the diet of Augsburg; and in the strongest terms requested, that, through the interposition of the prince, his cause might be heard in Germany, and not at Rome. Frederic the Wise understood the arts and practice of the court of Rome, and was convinced of the propriety, and even the necessity, of seconding Luther's wishes. Accordingly he urged the competency of a German tribunal in an ecclesiastical controversy of that nature; and it seems to have been entirely owing to the address, the penetration, and the firmness of this great prince, that the Roman pontiff at last consented that Cardinal Cajetan, who was then his legate at Augsburg, should take cognizance of the matter. If the delinquent showed proper marks of penitence and submission, he was to be kindly received again into the bosom of the church; but if he refused to appear before his appointed judge, the legate was commissioned then to denounce publicly, against him and his adherents, all the thunders and anathemas of papal indignation.

Leo X., perceiving how great a favourite Luther was with the Elector of Saxony, judged it expedient, by all the means in his power, to secure the support and concurrence of that prince in an affair which he had now begun to consider as of the greatest moment. For this purpose, he acquainted Frederic, in a polite and affectionate, but very artful epistle, with the measures which he had been compelled to adopt, through the disobedience of an Augustinian monk. He styles Luther a son of iniquity, a prevaricator, who boasts of the protection of the elector, but in fact reverences no superior whatever. "I know," says the pope, "he has no ground for representing you as one who encourages and supports him; nevertheless, I exhort you in the Lord, and as you would preserve the reputation and dignity of a good Catholic prince, to be on your guard, lest the lustre of your highly honoured ancestors should be in any degree tarnished by this calumny." He then states the commission he had given to his legate Cajetan, and concludes with a strong exhortation and injunction to Frederic, to contribute his utmost to secure the person of Luther, and deliver him up to the power of the holy see. He declared, however, at the same time, that if the accused were found innocent, he should be dismissed in peace and with favour; and that,

even if he were guilty, clemency should be exercised towards him largely upon his repentance.

It is well worthy of notice, that in this epistle the pope suppresses a very material fact, namely, that Luther had already, and without trial, been condemned at Rome, as a heretic, by the Bishop of Ascoli, the auditor of the apostolic chamber! This clearly appears from the pope's own brief to Cajetan; and the poor persecuted monk, in his writings, after he became acquainted with the fact, makes several pertinent observations upon it.

Indeed the fact of Luther's condemnation at Rome previous to his examination before Cajetan was so important, and implied so much violence and animosity in Leo and his advisers, that it may well be doubted whether our reformer, intrepid as he was, if he had been informed of it, would have ventured to appear at all at Augsburg. It was on his return from that place that he first learned at Nuremberg the nature and extent of the papal commission, namely, that, being already pronounced a pertinacious heretic, his person was to be secured and kept in safety till further orders for his removal to Rome.

We may observe, that a short time before these events the celebrated Melancthon had been received as Greek professor at the university of Wittemberg, in the twenty-second year of his age. The lectures of this truly learned and good man, together with those of Luther, were attended by crowds of students; and the university of Leipzig, a city, on account of the principles of its sovereign, George of Saxony, wholly under Roman influence, declined in its lustre. The consequence was, that Luther became still more odious to the hierarchy. Add to this, that his defence of his Theses, and a sermon against the abuses of officials in excommunications, just published, had exasperated his adversaries to the highest degree. We learn from his letters to Staupitz and Spalatinus what were the feelings and reflections of our hero at this alarming conjuncture. To the former he said, "Doubt not that I mean to be free in searching and handling the word of God. These citations and menaces move me not." To the latter he writes thus:—"From the bottom of my heart I wish not to involve the elector in my perils. There is but one thing which I hope he may be able to do for me, namely to prevent any violence

on my person. And if he cannot do even that conveniently, I would have all the danger to be my own. What I have undertaken to defend, I trust I shall defend effectually. It may be found necessary to pay some regard to self-preservation, but a regard to truth is paramount to every other consideration."

The Elector of Saxony conducted himself throughout this difficult affair with the most extraordinary discretion. He was determined not to permit Luther to be sent to Rome, where he would be at the mercy of his enraged adversaries; but for the purpose of carrying this point the more easily, and also in the hope that an accommodation might take place with the Roman see, he promised the pope's legate that he would take effectual care to place the supposed heretic before him for examination at Augsburg. While however Frederic sent Luther to Augsburg at his own charge, he provided effectually for his safety by giving him letters of recommendation to the senate and principal inhabitants of the city. These, instantly on his arrival, exhorted him not to appear before the cardinal till he had obtained a promise of safe-conduct from the emperor, who was then hunting at some distance from the city. Through the influence of the same persons this important request of a safe-conduct was granted; and after three days the emperor's council announced to the cardinal that the public faith was pledged to Luther, and that he must therefore take no violent steps against him. The cardinal, though much chagrined, answered, "It is very well; nevertheless I shall do my duty." Luther informs us, that during these three days he was constantly pressed, by a very troublesome emissary of Cajetan, to recant. "If I would but recant," he says, "all would be right."

Cardinal Cajetan (whose proper name was Thomas de Vio, of the town of Cajeta) is allowed by Luther himself to have been naturally a man of a benevolent temper. Yet the choosing of this cardinal for the purpose of reconciling matters must not be produced as an example of discretion in Leo X. He was excessively superstitious, and also entertained the most lofty ideas of papal authority. He wrote a book on the power of the Roman pontiff, which is said to have procured for him the archbishopric of Palermo and a cardinal's hat. In addition to all this, he was a Dominican, and

consequently the declared enemy of Luther and friend of Tetzel. Such a person was ill fitted to sit as judge or arbitrator in this nice and perilous controversy.

At the first interview Luther prostrated himself before the cardinal, and was courteously received. But at the same time he was required to retract his errors, to avoid them in future, and to abstain from every thing which might disturb the peace of the church. And these three things were stated expressly to be the order of the most holy pope. Luther desired that he might be permitted to see the pope's BRIEF. But this request was, for obvious reasons, peremptorily refused.

The heaviest charge against the reformer seems to have been, that he had transgressed the bull of Clement VI., which had defined the nature and extent of indulgences; and it may easily be conceived with how much indignation the cardinal would hear Luther's defence, namely, that the holy Scriptures which he could produce in support of his own doctrine had abundantly more weight with him than a pontifical bull, which in fact proved nothing, but merely recited the opinion of Thomas Aquinas. Cajetan, in answer, exalted the authority of the pope above all councils, above the church, and even above the Scriptures themselves. To this Luther opposed the appeal of the university of Paris, whose reputation had always stood high, as the parent of science, and the defender of the purest Christianity. Cajetan, in a rage, declared that the Parisians would meet with due punishment; and that Gerson,* whose writings Luther had quoted, was DAMNED, together with all his followers. So extravagantly high were the ideas of papal power conceived by this cardinal, that even the very moderate contradiction given in France to the pontiff appeared in his eyes an unpardonable sin. Little did he then imagine how much more openly his magnificent lord and master was to be opposed within the short space of a few months.

Frowns and menaces were by no means adapted to intimidate the determined mind of the Saxon reformer. He continued to insist on the authority of Scripture. He

* The celebrated chancellor of the university of Paris, who maintained, at the council of Constance, the superiority of a general council over the pope.

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owned he might have erred, but he th[illegible] that his errors should be pointed out on sc[illegible] before he was required to retract.

When Luther found that not the smallest progress was made by conversation with the cardinal, and that all the fine promises of kind treatment held out to him amounted precisely to this, "You must either recant or suffer punishment," he wisely determined to commit his answers to writing. Accordingly he appeared before the cardinal with a notary and witnesses; and repeated his protestations of general obedience to the church, and his perfect readiness to recant any error of which he could be convicted. Cajetan replied with so much acrimony, that the accused monk had no opportunity of explaining or vindicating his sentiments. He absolutely refused to dispute with Luther, either in public or private; he would not even consent that a single word of his own answers should be put down in writing: but continued to press for a recantation. Staupitz, who was present at the scene, and who hitherto had acted the part of a steady friend of Luther, rose up, and entreated the legate to permit the accused to return his answers at length in writing: and to this request he, with great difficulty, at last acceded.

At the next conference Luther exhibited his written explanation and defence, which the cardinal treated with the greatest contempt. He told him he had filled his paper with passages of Scripture which were irrelevant, and, in general, that his answers were those of a perfect idiot. He condescended however to say he would send them to Rome. Lastly, he ordered Luther to depart, and to come no more into his sight, unless he was disposed to recant. Notwithstanding this rough treatment, it was Luther's firm opinion that it would have given the cardinal *great pleasure* to hear him recant. "Every thing," he says, "would, I doubt not, have been settled in the most peaceable and affectionate manner, if I would but have written down six letters—REVOCO, I RECANT."—In the evening of the very day in which this last conference took place, Cajetan sent for the vicar-general Staupitz, and desired him to persuade his young monk to retract. Staupitz promised to do his utmost. "You must answer his scriptural arguments," said Cajetan. Staupitz replied ingenuously, "That is

above my power. I am his inferior both in capacity and in knowledge of the Scriptures." Indeed, throughout this whole conference at Augsburg, Cajetan appears to have been conscious how ill qualified he was to enter the lists with Luther, as a disputant in theological questions. Indeed the doctrines of the gospel, as far as we can judge, gave him little concern. His anxiety was, how he might best ensure obedience to the pontifical mandates. He inquired not whether these mandates were agreeable or repugnant to Scripture, it was sufficient for him to know that they were the dictates of a pope.

Some objections were on this occasion made to Luther's ideas of justification by faith; but Cajetan did not scruple to confess, that, if he would but have retracted his opposition to the indulgences, all other differences might have been composed in an amicable manner; and that his opinions concerning the efficacy of faith in justification, and in the sacrament, admitted of being modified and interpreted so as to be inoffensive. It is needless to observe how very different was Luther's estimate of things. "If he gave up the article of justification by faith," he said, "he should deny Jesus Christ himself." When Staupitz was informed of the cardinal's sentiment, he expressed a wish that he had avowed it in the presence of the notary and the witnesses; "because then," said he, "there would have been clear proof that, at Rome, MONEY was held in greater estimation than FAITH."

It was on Friday, the fourteenth of October, 1518, that Luther made his last appearance before the pope's legate. A report was spread, that, notwithstanding the engagement of a safe-conduct, he was to be seized and confined in irons. He remained however at Augsburg till the succeeding Monday: but without hearing any thing from the cardinal. On the Monday, by a letter couched in the most respectful terms, he begged pardon for any irreverent or unbecoming language towards the pontiff, which might have escaped him in the heat and hurry of the debate; and even promised to desist from treating the subject of indulgences any more, provided his antagonists were enjoined to observe a similar silence. But to retract his sentiment, or give up the truth, he absolutely refused. This extremely injudicious and suppliant measure, in which Luther carried his

concessions to the very limit of what his conscience would permit, is probably to be traced to the counsels of Staupitz, who, being, as we shall see, much wrought upon by the circumstances in which he was placed, exhorted his less pliable monk to exhibit to his superiors some plainer marks of obedience and humility. The firm temper of Luther, which had resisted the imperious dictates of a haughty cardinal, instantly relented under the entreaties of a mild and affectionate friend. Probably, however, no part of his own conduct, on a review of his proceedings at Augsburg, would afford him less satisfaction than writing this letter. He received *no* answer to it: and on the next day he addressed another letter to Cajetan, expressed in more spirited language, and nearer to his usual strain. He said, "He conceived he had done every thing which became an obedient son of the church. He had undertaken a long and dangerous journey, though he was but weak in body, and had very little money to spend. He had laid the book which contained his opinions at the feet of his holiness the pope; he had appeared before his most reverend father the cardinal, and he was now waiting to be instructed how far he was right in his opinions, and how far wrong. It could no longer serve any good purpose to spend his time there, and be a burden to his friends. Besides, the cardinal had told him to come no more into his sight, unless he would recant; and," said Luther, "in my former letter I have distinctly pointed out all the recantation I can possibly make." He then signified his positive determination to leave the place; but not before he had formally appealed from the pope's legate, nay, from the pope himself, "ill informed, to the same most holy Leo X., that he might be better informed." In making this appeal, he confessed he acted rather from the judgment of some persons of distinction than from his own. He should have thought it unnecessary in this case. He wished to refer every thing to the determination of the church. What could he do more? He was not a contentious adversary, but a tractable scholar. Even the Elector Frederic, he knew, would be better pleased with his appeal than his recantation. He therefore besought the cardinal to consider both his departure and his appeal as the effect of necessity, and of the authority of his friends. They said, "WHAT will you retract? Is YOUR retraction

to be the rule of OUR FAITH? If any thing which you have advanced is to be condemned, let the church decide and do you obey." This reasoning, in his mind, was irresistible.

Luther waited four whole days, reckoning from the day of his dismission by the cardinal, and still received no answer. The suspense was extremely afflicting; and both himself and his friends began to suspect that this total silence portended violence to his person, as the cardinal might not improbably be waiting for further orders from Rome for a step which, under all the circumstances of the case, might be too bold to be taken without them. To avoid therefore being seized and imprisoned, in case any such design were meditated against him, Luther quitted Augsburg very early in the morning of the nineteenth of October. A friendly senator ordered the gates of the city to be opened, and he mounted a horse which Staupitz had procured for him. He had neither boots, nor spurs, nor sword; and he was so fatigued with that day's journey, that when he alighted from his horse he was not able to stand, but fell down among the straw in the stable. Before his departure, he had taken care that every thing relative to his appeal should be done in a proper manner, in the presence of a notary public. Such was the conclusion of the conferences at Augsburg, in which the firmness and plain dealing of Luther were no less conspicuous than was the unreasonable and imperious behaviour of the cardinal.

Whatever might be the cause of that silence for several days on the part of Cajetan, which our reformer and his friends beheld with so much just suspicion and jealousy, it seems natural, on almost every imaginable view of his motives, to conclude that the cardinal must have been much mortified at the sudden departure of Luther. He had neither punished the heretic nor reduced him to submission. The court of Rome would probably be highly displeased when they heard of his escape; and, in their disappointment, would be apt to forget the difficult circumstances under which the cardinal acted, and to attribute both the present and the consequent mischiefs to his bad management. In fact, as soon as the events at Augsburg were known at Rome, the pope's legate was blamed exceedingly for his severe and illiberal treatment of Luther, at the very moment, it was said, when he ought to have

promised him great riches, a bishopric, or even a cardinal's hat!* In the bitterness of his heart, Cajetan complained to the Elector of Saxony of Luther's insolent and insincere behaviour; and even reproached his highness for supporting such a character. He said, that he had conversed for many hours privately with Staupitz, and one or two other learned friends, respecting this business; that his object had been to preserve the dignity of the apostolic see, without disgracing BROTHER MARTIN; and that, when he had put matters into such a train as to have reasonable hopes of the success of his plan, he had found himself completely deluded. Martin, his several associates, and his vicar-general had suddenly disappeared. Martin indeed had written letters, in which he pretended to beg pardon, but he had retracted not one word of the scandalous language he had used. Lastly, Cajetan warned the prince to consider how much he was bound, in honour and conscience, either to send Luther to Rome or to banish him from his dominions. As to himself, he said, he had washed his hands of so pestilential a business, but his highness might be assured the cause would go on at Rome. It was too important to be passed over in silence.

Every pious reader will lament the effect which these turbulent and contentious scenes produced upon the mind of the venerable Staupitz. Two reasons induce me, indeed, to conclude with certainty that he acted towards Luther with perfect faithfulness at Augsburg. First, it is beyond all dispute that he affronted Cajetan by leaving that place suddenly and without taking leave; which he would never have done if he had betrayed his friend by dishonourably entering into any plans for seizing his person: and secondly, by way of encouraging the persecuted monk in his difficult circumstances, he used this language to him: "Remember, my brother, you undertook this business in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Luther himself, three years afterward, owned that these precious words "sank deep into his mind." But the truth is, this reverend vicar-general was a man of a timid temper, and well advanced in years; also, his views of the gospel were far from being bright or distinct; and

* Father Paul.

lastly, the prospect of peace with the hierarchy, at least at Wittemberg, was extremely gloomy.

All these circumstances co-operating, it would seem, with his private conversations with Cajetan, influenced this good man to leave his friend, withdraw all further opposition to the popedom, and retire to Salzburg. Our more determined and adventurous reformer did not hesitate to tell him, that he "stuck fast between Christ and the pope." Let us hope however that this judgment of Luther was of the harsher sort; and that, in passing it, sufficient allowances were not made for the different tempers and ages of men, and for inveterate habits.

But perhaps the circumstance which may be thought most unfavourable to the reputation of Staupitz is, that, in the year 1523, we find him preferred to an abbacy at Salzburg. Luther's affectionate regard and veneration for his vicar-general restrained him from saying any thing harsh or severe on this occasion, but he could not dissemble his anxieties respecting the consequences of this preferment. We will conclude this chapter with two valuable extracts from his letters. The first dated 1522, when Luther had heard an unfounded rumour that his friend was actually made an abbot. "The report," he says, "of your being made an abbot is so general, that if I had not received your own letter in contradiction I must have been compelled to believe it. It is, I suppose, in the same way that you receive UNTRUTHS concerning me. May the providence of God attend you! But, I confess, my plain understanding does not point out to me how it can be advisable for you to accept an abbacy at this time. I would not, however, interfere with your judgment. One thing I entreat you by the bowels of Christ,—not readily to believe those who calumniate me. In regard to what you inform me, that my doctrines are the delight of debauchees, and that many scandalous practices have been the consequence of my recent publications, I am neither afraid of such censorious representations, nor surprised to hear of them. Certainly I have laboured and am labouring, that the pure word of God may be spread abroad without tumult. But you know that I am not master of events. My object has been to attack, by means of the WRITTEN WORD, that system of impieties which has been introduced in opposition to sound

doctrine. The abominations, my father, the abominations of the pope, with his whole kingdom, must be destroyed. And the Lord does this 'without hand,' by the WORD alone. The subject exceeds all human comprehension; and therefore we need not wonder that great commotions, scandals, and even prodigies should arise. Let not these things disturb you, my father. I cherish the best hopes. The counsel and the outstretched arm of God are plain in this matter. Remember how my cause from the very first gave the highest offence to the world, and yet it has continually prevailed. Satan feels his wound: hence he rages the more, and endeavours to throw all into confusion."

The second letter, dated 1523, is addressed to "the reverend Abbot of St. Peter's in Salzburg."—"Reverend father, your silence is unkind. But, though I cease to find favour in your eyes, I ought never to forget YOU, through whose means the light of the gospel first dawned in my heart. I must tell you the truth; it would have been more agreeable to me if you had not been appointed an abbot: but, since it is so, let neither of us interfere with our respective rights of private judgment. Your best friends are sorry for your leaving us, but still much more sorry that you are so near the infamous Cardinal Langius, and that you will be compelled to bear in silence all his outrageous behaviour. I shall wonder if you are not in danger of denying Christ..... We still hope the best of you, though your long silence disheartens us. If you are become another man, (which may Christ forbid!) I speak plainly, I shall throw away no more words, but have recourse to prayer, that God may be pleased to show mercy upon you and us all. You observe, reverend father, how doubtfully I express myself. The reason is, your long silence leaves us ignorant of the disposition of your mind; whereas you very well know our most secret thoughts and wishes. Permit me, however, to speak positively on one point: We are confident that we are not really objects of your contempt, even though you should dislike all our proceedings. I shall not cease to pray that you may be as much estranged from the popedom as I am at this moment, and indeed as you were formerly. May the Lord hear me, and take you and us to himself!"

These letters throw light on the general character both

of the writer and his friend: they indicate the evident progress in knowledge respecting the nature of the papacy which had taken place in Luther's mind between the years 1518 and 1523: they manifest the strength of divine grace, which enabled him to withstand that threatening storm which alarmed his more aged friend, and drove him into a dishonourable shelter; at the same time they exhibit in a very pleasing light the ingenuousness, the candour, and the forbearance of the writer's mind. Staupitz enjoyed his abbacy only a very short time. He died in the year 1524. How little was it worth his while to have sacrificed, probably, his peace of mind, and to have brought his character into suspicion, for so short-lived a possession!

CHAPTER IV.

The Controversy continued—Conferences with Miltitz—Disputation of Leipzig.

The condition of Luther after his return to Wittemberg was peculiarly afflictive. Before himself he saw the total ruin of his worldly circumstances, the hardships of poverty and of exile, and the fear of a violent death from papal vengeance. He was not without hope of the protection of the elector, partly from the well-known justice and humanity of that prince's character, and partly from the good offices of his friend Spalatinus. Moreover, as yet the interference of Frederic in the ecclesiastical controversy had not only been firm and discreet, but also as spirited and friendly as could reasonably be expected, in behalf of one who was looked on by the hierarchy as a turbulent and abandoned heretic. Still it behooved our reformer not to be too confident in his expectations of future support. He had abundant cause to be thankful for the past exertions of his prince, which had been found so useful and effective; but trying times were coming on apace. Every day the contest grew more and more perilous. Luther himself had a single eye to the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ; but he

could not be answerable for the zeal or the perseverance of others. He was well acquainted with the human heart, and he foresaw that political and secular concerns might clash with the interests of the gospel. He would not wonder if the love of many began to wax cold: even his much esteemed friend Staupitz had already quitted Saxony; and though the elector had hitherto manfully defended him against the tyrannical machinations of the court of Rome, it might well be doubted whether the chief motives of this magnanimous conduct were a regard for the honour of God and the religion of Christ.

It was an excellent part of Luther's character, that in the most critical and difficult situations he could commit his cause to the God whom he served, with firm and entire reliance on HIS WILL; and at the same time be as active and indefatigable in using all prudential means as if the events depended solely on human exertions. In his present danger and perplexity he cast his eyes on France, where formerly some opposition had been made to the fulness of papal domination; and where he hoped that he might profess and preach divine truth with greater security than in Germany. "Not," said he in a letter to Spalatinus, "that I care much on my own account; for, in fact, I am concerned that I should not be thought worthy to suffer for the truth. But it grieves me to see the fair prospect of our rising seminary thus suddenly clouded, and the studies of the young men at Wittemberg, who are wonderfully zealous for the acquisition of sacred literature, blasted in the bud." In another letter to the same friend, he says, "Every day I expect from Rome the arrival of the ecclesiastical anathemas; and I am therefore disposing of my affairs in such a manner, that when those curses shall arrive, I may be ready, like Abraham, to depart, not knowing whither. Yet, in another sense, I do know whither I shall go, for God is everywhere. However, I leave you this farewell letter. See that you have the courage to read the letter of a man excommunicated and accursed!" In a third letter he declared he was ready either to go or to stay. "Some friends," he said, "advise me to deliver myself up to the elector, who will protect me in some safe place, and at the same time inform the pope's legate that my person is under confinement, and that I am ready to give answers to such questions as shall

be proposed to me. I commit this plan to your prudence. I am in the hands of God and of my friends. It vexes me to think that it should be so commonly believed that the prince in secret supports me. This report, if any thing can, will drive me hence, that I may not involve him in my dangers. To be brief: while I remain here, my liberty, both of writing and of speaking, is very much restrained; whereas, if I leave Germany, I will open my heart to the world, and offer up my life freely in the service of Christ."

Those who have most considered how great a trial to a thoughtful mind a state of suspense in dangerous and critical seasons is, will form the best judgment of Luther's situation towards the end of the year 1518. The foregoing extracts lay open his secret feelings and resolutions, at the same time they also exhibit his extraordinary faith, patience, and resignation.

In this conjuncture the Elector of Saxony signified his earnest wish that Luther would not leave Wittemberg. This spirited resolution is to be ascribed partly to the interference and supplication of the university of that place in behalf of their beloved professor, and partly to the imperious and threatening language which Cajetan had used. Frederic, with a calmness and dignity suitable to his character, declared that he could not expel Luther from Wittemberg without doing much injury to his university; and further, that he should not consider him as a heretic till he had been heard and was convicted. Animated with this favourable determination of the prince, the professor of theology resolved to remain on the spot; and, in a discourse from the pulpit, he requested the people, in case his person should at length become the victim of papal severity, not to harbour the least ill-will against the pope or any human being whatever, but to commit the cause to God.

It will be proper to mention here, that, besides the literary and controversial employments of Luther at Wittemberg, he had for some time discharged the office of a pastor of the town, as a substitute of Simon Heinsius, the ordinary minister, who then laboured under bodily infirmities: and thus this illustrious reformer supported at once the character of a theological teacher and disputant, and also of a popular preacher and parochial clergyman.

Luther, foreseeing the manner in which he should proba-

bly be treated at Rome, and desirous of anticipating the papal censures, of which he was in daily expectation, had recourse to the wise expedient of appealing formally to a general council. In the instrument of his appeal he still professes obedience to the authority of the apostolic see; but as the pope was only a man, and like other men liable to err, and as St. Peter, the most holy of all his predecessors, had actually erred, he appealed to the next general council; which, when legally assembled, was a power superior to that of the pope, and could afford redress to the oppressed.

It soon appeared that Luther was not mistaken in his conjectures respecting the intentions of the Romish court. His appeal to a future council is dated November 28, 1518. But Leo X., without mentioning the name of Luther, had on the 9th of the same month issued a bull, in which he confirmed the doctrine of indulgences in the most absolute manner. By this step, no less improvident than impious, he put it out of the power of the friends of the papacy to vindicate or even to extenuate its conduct. The grossest venality and contempt of true piety and salutary discipline had prevailed in Germany through the sale of indulgences. To maintain the rectitude of the practice without the least correction of excesses, at a time when the memory of the transactions was recent, prevented every attempt that might be made to reconcile Luther to the hierarchy. The providence of God was admirable in thus barring up his return to the church of Rome, while he was as yet far from being convinced of the totally antichristian state of the popedom.*

While these events were passing in Germany, similar scenes were exhibited in Switzerland. Samson, a Franciscan of Milan, by the mercenary prostitution of indulgences, roused the zeal of Ulric Zwingle, henceforth distinguished as the Swiss reformer, as Tetzel had done that of Martin Luther. The infatuation of the hierarchy was incurable: but evangelical light and liberty were fast advancing to the relief of both Germany and Switzerland.

During the whole progress of the reformation, the pious reader has reason to admire the providential circumstances which, both in succession and in concurrence, favoured the

* Luther's first appeal, mentioned p. 55, was dated Oct. 16, 1518.

happy deliverance of the nations from papal captivity. We have just seen how the late haughty conduct of Cajetan tended to fix the mind of Frederic more steadily in the interests of the reformer; and this was a consequence which proved extremely influential upon the subsequent events. Immediately this WISE prince solicited the emperor to exert all his authority at Rome, that the present ecclesiastical controversy might be settled in Germany by impartial judges. What would have been the ultimate effect of this prudent step we are unable to say. Maximilian died in the beginning of the year 1519; and during the interregnum the Elector of Saxony, as vicar of the empire, possessed sufficient power to protect and cherish Lutheranism in its infancy. "The violent tempest," says Luther, "subsided by little and little; and the pontifical thunders of excommunication were gradually more and more despised." The resolutions of Frederic were not a little confirmed by a letter which he received, in the spring of 1519, from the learned Erasmus. Brevity does not permit us to present the reader with this elegant composition, in which the writer manages his subject with wonderful address, dexterity, and politeness. By the following answer, however, a judgment may be formed, both of the matter contained in it, and of the effect it produced on the mind of the prince. "The elector, Duke of Saxony, to Erasmus. 'It gives us the greatest satisfaction to be informed by you, that Lutheranism is not disproved by the learned, and that the writings of Doctor Martin are read with the greatest avidity. He is a person almost unanimously admired, at home and abroad, both for the integrity of his life and for his solid erudition. That he has remained hitherto in Saxony under our protection is, indeed, owing rather to the just cause he defends, than to the man himself. Nothing can be more contrary to our principles than to suffer a man who has deserved reward to be oppressed and punished: nor, with the help of Almighty God, will we ever allow an innocent person to become a victim to the selfish malice of the wicked."

The court of Rome, finding it impossible to stop the proceedings of Luther by mere authority and threatening, had now recourse to the art of negotiation. The haughty pontiff had become sensible of his imprudence in having intrusted the management of the controversy to such a

commissioner as Cajetan; but we shall soon see that still he had learned no lessons of true wisdom and moderation from what happened at Augsburg. He condescended, indeed, to employ a person of a different stamp; one who, by his insinuating manners and gentle treatment of the reformer, raised considerable expectations of at least a temporary peace; but, happily for the reformation, this judicious and temperate policy was presently succeeded by measures most unaccountably imprudent and disgusting. This new legate was Charles Miltitz, a Saxon knight, who, as a lay character, might be supposed less under the dominion of party and prejudice than his predecessor. He was commissioned to present to the Elector Frederic the consecrated golden rose, which was considered as a peculiar mark of the pope's favour and esteem; and, if possible, to put an end to all the ecclesiastical disputes which had produced the rupture between Luther and the Roman see. Frederic had formerly solicited the favour of the rose with much earnestness; but on this occasion he is said to have received it with a cool and almost contemptuous politeness; and in nowise could he be induced to change his measures respecting the professor of Wittemberg.

Miltitz appears to have come into Saxony furnished with what he supposed a competent number of attendants to seize the heretic, and carry him a prisoner to Rome;* but perceiving this to be impracticable, and being foiled in his attempts to influence the mind of the elector, he changed his plan. He repaired to Leipzig, and there finding Tetzel, he twice rebuked him with the greatest severity, before his own provincial, for his iniquitous practices in the business of indulgences. With Luther himself he had several conferences, which proved fruitless as to the essential points; and the only effect of these negotiations, in the former part of 1519, seems to have been that the Electors of Saxony and Treves agreed, that the complete examination of the matters in dispute should be deferred till the meeting of the first German diet of the new emperor, Charles V.; and that, in the mean time, Luther should write a submissive letter to the pope. To this our reformer readily consented, for he was by no means disposed to break with the pontiff. The

* Milner, iv. 432.

learned translator of Mosheim seems out of humour with him for having made "weak submissions" on this occasion; and yet he owns that, "properly speaking, there was no retraction of his former tenets, nor the smallest degree of respect shown to the infamous traffic of indulgences." If so, his submissive conduct, taken with all the circumstances which accompanied it, is to be considered as indicating STRENGTH of mind, not weakness, and a spirit of discrimination, rather than of blind acquiescence. We ought not to judge of this great man by the feelings and habits of Protestants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His inimical historian Maimbourg says, "His letter to the pope was rather civil than humble, but it contained nothing to the purpose."

Of Luther's personal conferences with Miltitz, he himself gives the following account. "Charles Miltitz saw me at Altenburg, and complained that I had united the whole world to myself, and drawn it aside from the pope; that he had discovered this at the inns as he travelled. 'Martin,' said he, 'I took you for some solitary old theologian; whereas I find you a person in all the vigour of life. Then you are so much favoured with the popular opinion, that I could not expect, with the aid of twenty-five thousand soldiers, to force you with me to Rome.' After this flattery, he entreated me to consult for pacific measures, and promised that he would endeavour that the pope should do the same. We supped together, and I was treated with the greatest courtesy. I conducted myself in such a manner as if I had not seen through these Italian arts. I could only promise that I would do all which I could consistently with truth and a good conscience; that I also loved peace, and was driven into these broils by mere necessity. This Charles Miltitz was esteemed a frivolous character, and his advice was frivolous; nevertheless, it is my judgment, that if the friends of the papacy and the pope himself had treated me in this manner at first, matters would never have come to so great a rupture."

On this occasion Luther renewed his proposal of silence on both sides in the affair of indulgences. In this he may be thought to have acted inconsistently with his former declarations, and to have conceded too much to the hierarchy: but the answer is, he had already manfully resisted

the Roman see in that abominable traffic; and he began to hesitate how far it was HIS proper business to proceed in a matter of that sort. In a word, his conscience was at present puzzled respecting the extent of the obedience which he owed to the rulers whose authority he then allowed. Harassed with doubts, and perfectly aware of the danger that threatened him, he would have given the world for a sound and discreet counsellor: of the *danger* he sought no partner: but, alas! his best and wisest friends, when pressed closely concerning the most critical and perilous part of the contest, absolutely stood aloof.* Leo, however, disdained to open the door of reconciliation. And in this again we must acknowledge the overruling providence of God, which made the pride and folly of the sovereign pontiff the means of introducing an effectual reformation. The inquisitive spirit of the humble professor of Wittemberg was thus enabled, by degrees and a constant study of the Scriptures, to acquire a practical conviction that the tyranny of the papal hierarchy was no longer to be endured.

While the pope's nuncio was negotiating a reconciliation in Germany, Tetzel, the wretched subaltern whose scandalous conduct had so much disgraced his employers, met with the reward which frequently awaits the ministers of iniquity. He found himself deserted by all the world. It became necessary for those whom he had served to discard him, and he had no resources in his own conscience. Under the rough treatment of Miltitz, this daring and boisterous instrument of papal avarice and extortion actually fell sick, wasted away, and at last died of a broken heart. A dreadful lesson! A little before his death, Luther, hearing of his anguish of mind, and sympathizing with him in his distress, wrote to him in the most kind and consolatory strains, and begged him not to be distressed with the recollection of any thing that had passed between them: but, as far as appears, the unhappy man, after having administered a false peace to thousands, left the world destitute of comfort in his own soul.

About the middle of the year 1519, Erasmus wrote from

* After he had conferred with Miltitz, he wrote to his friend Spalatinus; and he also particularly entreated the elector, that, for the sake of Almighty God, he would use so much clemency towards him as freely to say what he wished him to do in the present circumstances.

Louvain an epistle to Luther, which proves with what caution and temper that great man had beheld the progress of the contest. He takes care not to appear a partisan of the reformer: he speaks of him with a studied ambiguity; commends him so far as he could consistently with his determined purpose not to expose himself to trouble or rebuke; and recommends to him moderation and mildness in his proceedings. In this last point he certainly deserved the thanks of Luther. Let us remember, however, that timid and artful politicians were never employed, to any good purpose, in the service of Jesus Christ.

But it was not only the wary Erasmus and the timid Staupitz who shrank from the dangerous contest with the hierarchy in which Luther was involved; even Spalatinus himself was not a little intimidated by the daring measures of his adventurous friend. Several of the elector's court also were alarmed in a similar way. And thus the Saxon reformer, whose righteous cause was eminently that of mankind in general, and who himself needed encouragement in his perils and anxieties, was called upon to rouse and animate the drooping minds of his best supporters, who began to waver, and complain that matters were carried too far. This departure from a steady and consistent conduct in his more enlightened adherents was, no doubt, a trial peculiarly severe and vexatious to Luther. Conscious of integrity and disinterestedness, and overcome with chagrin and disappointment, a man is, in such a case, tempted to abandon altogether a dangerous conflict, where his solitary efforts against a host of adversaries will inevitably prove abortive. Where, however, the cause is that of true religion, and where the gospel of Christ has laid strong hold, both on the understanding and the affections, he will not yield to the temptation. We then look for the operation of other motives besides those of mere human nature. As we then serve a Master who MUST be obeyed, so we have promises of help, directions for resignation, and grounds of comfort under apparent success, such as belong to no worldly enterprises whatever. The following extract of a letter to Spalatinus will illustrate these observations.

"Luther to Spalatinus. Do not give way to fear too much, my dear Spalatinus; neither tease your mind, by filling it with human imaginations. You know I must have

perished long ago in my various struggles with the supporters of papal abominations, unless Christ had taken care of me and my concerns. Was there a single person who did not expect that my ruin would have taken place before this time? I assure you I suppress many things, which if I were elsewhere I should freely publish, concerning the enormities of Rome. But you must never hope that I shall be free from persecution and danger, unless I were entirely to give up the cause of sound divinity. My friends, if they please, may suppose me beside myself; nevertheless, I say, if this contest be really of God, it will not be ended till TRUTH effectually save itself by its own right hand; not by mine, nor by yours. From the very first I have been expecting matters to come to the situation in which they are at this moment. However, I always told you that I would quit the country if my residence in Saxony was attended with any danger to the prince."

The immediate circumstance which seems to have given the alarm at this time to the friends of Luther, was his bold declaration in his answers to the positions of Eckius respecting the foundation of the pope's authority. To call in question the origin of the power of the pope was to tread on perilous ground indeed. The nations as yet secretly revered his majesty, and dreaded his vengeance; though, in regard to ecclesiastical abuses in general, they had begun to open their eyes, and were rapidly receiving fresh light.

The name of Eckius of Ingoldstadt has already been mentioned among the adversaries of Luther. This able and learned doctor had formerly been the friend of our reformer; but a thirst of fame and a prospect of worldly advantages seduced him from the cause of TRUTH. The facts we have to produce indicate but too plainly the motives of Eckius. After his literary defeat in the affair of indulgences, he circulated thirteen propositions, all of them levelled against the heresies of Lutheranism. One of these propositions affirmed the grand article of a papist's faith, namely, "That the pontiffs are vicars of Christ, and the successors of St. Peter." Luther had the sagacity instantly to see through his design, and expressed himself to the following effect: "I never so much as touched upon this subject in any of my discourses. Eckius now brings it forward to serve several purposes. He thinks he shall hereby cast an odium

upon me, and at the same time flatter the court of Rome, to his own profit, and to the ruin of his brother Martin Luther."

The fact now before us naturally brings us to the famous disputation which was carried on publicly at Leipzig, for many days together, in the course of this year. Eckius, relying on the brilliancy of his own talents and the popularity of his cause, earnestly sought for a public exhibition of theological skill; and with this view challenged Carolstadt, the colleague and adherent of Luther, and even Luther himself, to try their strength with him in a contest on the points in dispute. Carolstadt was a doctor of divinity, and archdeacon of Wittemberg, and is esteemed one of the first open defenders of Luther. The challenge was accepted; and George duke of Saxony, uncle of the elector, offered the combatants his city of Leipzig as the scene of debate, with an engagement for their security, and a promise of every convenience. He anticipated great glory to the papal cause from the well-known abilities and attainments of Eckius. Luther obtained leave to be present at the contest as a spectator, but was expressly denied the grant of a safe-conduct if he attempted to appear in the character of a disputant. The assembly was splendid, the expectations of mankind were strongly excited; and it was vainly imagined that some decision would be made concerning the objects of contention.

The first subject of debate between Eckius and Carolstadt respected the limits of nature and grace. The latter disputant defended the whole doctrine of Augustine concerning grace, which, Luther observes, Eckius did not oppose by argument, or with any real difference of sentiment, but only in mere words and in appearance. He granted that FREE-WILL without grace could effect nothing but sin. "It avails then," observes Luther, "not to good, but evil. Where then is its liberty? Moreover, every illiterate person who hears the expression FREE-WILL, naturally supposes that it implies man to be equally capable of good and evil; whence he will presume on his own strength, and think that he can convert himself to God. Eckius knows very well the impiety of this notion, yet he supports and spreads it. I too admit that man's will is FREE in a certain sense; not because it is now in the same state as it was in paradise, but

because it was made free originally, and may, through God's grace, become so again."

Such were the sentiments of Luther on this difficult subject; and, if due allowance be made for the impropriety of the term free-will, his ideas appear sufficiently in harmony with what the most evangelical persons in all ages have maintained. The whole controversy was carried on with much clamour and confusion; the Roman party prevailed in popularity at Leipzig; Eckius delivered what he had to say with prodigious animation, and is allowed to have far exceeded Carolstadt in energetic exertions of voice and action. Luther protests in the most solemn manner, that, as long as an appeal to books and written documents was admitted, his friend Carolstadt defended himself with a rich variety of apt and excellent quotations. "But," says he, "Eckius made a proposal that all books should be laid aside, and the dispute go on without them; the multitude gave a shout of approbation; and then I freely own that Eckius, who had the better memory and a greater flow of words, supported his side of the question in a more plausible manner than his opponent."

This disputation continued for six days, from June 29 to July 4; during which time the superior eloquence and acuteness of Eckius seem to have afforded a temporary triumph to the enemies of the reformation. Flushed with success, and thirsting for glory, this champion of the papal system came to Luther at his lodgings, and with an air of confidence said, "I understand you will not dispute with me in public."—"How can I dispute with you," said Luther, "when the Duke George refuses me my request of a safe-conduct?" Eckius replied, "If I am not to combat you I will spend no more time on Carolstadt. It was on YOUR account that I came hither. Suppose I could obtain the public faith for your safety, would you then meet me and try your strength?" Luther consented; and very soon after he had the duke's leave to take Carolstadt's place in the public debate.

The second theological conflict was carried on for ten days, with uncommon ardour and without intermission. Among the articles of controversy were the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, the nature of repentance and remission of sins, and particularly the foundation of the

supremacy of the Roman pontiffs. It was in this last article of the controversy that Eckius placed his chief strength and expectation of victory. The question concerning the superiority of the Roman see was well contrived to promote the ambitious designs of Eckius in every way. Luther, it was foreseen, must either shun the main point in debate by disgraceful evasions; or, by a direct avowal of his doctrines, expose himself to the charge of open heresy. He must either yield the palm of eloquence and of theological skill to his crafty adversary, or he would inevitably furnish such decisive proofs of rebellion against the hierarchy as would ensure his own condemnation at the court of Rome. Thus the troublesome innovator was supposed to be entangled in an inextricable dilemma; while the prudent defender of the established religion, looking forward to nothing but conquest and glory, anticipated the praises and honours of the Roman pontiff. Luther, whom we have observed to have been fully sensible in how nice and critical a situation he was placed, was much hurt by the ungenerous conduct of Eckius, and severely reproached him for it afterward.

To the talents and the artifices of the popish advocate, the Saxon reformer, besides his superior abilities and more intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, opposed a good conscience, a firm determination to hazard every thing in the cause of TRUTH, and a confident expectation of the blessing of the Almighty. In particular, against Eckius's doctrine of the divine right of the popes, he advanced the following proposition:—"All the proofs which can be produced to show that the church of Rome is superior to other churches are taken out of insipid decretals of the popes themselves, made within the last four hundred years; and against this notion of supremacy there are passages of the holy Scriptures, approved histories for eleven hundred years, and the determinations of the Council of Nice." Eckius was so much struck with the reasonings of Luther, in support of this proposition, and especially with the neat and well digested order in which his materials were arranged, that he was compelled to acknowledge, before a splendid audience, the "qualifications and attainments of his reverend opponent." He even besought their illustrious and magnificent mightinesses to pardon himself, who was so much occupied with other concerns, if he should not be able to produce such

a mass of accurate testimonies as the learned doctor had laid before them. He came to Leipzig, he said, not to write books, but to dispute.

We must here observe that, though Luther judged it impious to maintain the DIVINE RIGHT of the pope in that strict sense which makes him the successor of St. Peter and vicar of Christ, his extreme reverence for the Scriptures, and his tenderness of conscience, disposed him, as yet, to allow the superiority of the Roman see, but on different grounds. It could not be denied that the pontiffs had possessed a decided pre-eminence from age to age; and therefore he conceived it was his duty not to resist "the powers that be." This scriptural argument for a long time appeared to his mind in itself unanswerable: and he still further supported it by subordinate reasons into which it is unnecessary to enter. Accordingly he declares in one of his letters to Spalatinus at this period:—"To separate myself from the apostolical see of Rome is a thing that has never yet entered my mind." His next letter, however, to the same friend intimates a further insight into the essence of popery. "That I may be the better qualified," he says, "for the ensuing debate at Leipzig, I am turning over the decretals of the popes; and I would whisper into your ear that I begin to entertain doubts whether the Roman pontiff be not the very Antichrist of the Scriptures, or his messenger; so wretchedly corrupted by him, in the decretals, are the pure doctrines of Christ." As long as this new sentiment remained crude and unsettled in the mind of Luther, it certainly behooved him not to act upon it; but it is not difficult to understand how the divulging of so important a secret to Spalatinus must have startled the Elector Frederic and his court, who, we have seen, were sufficiently alarmed with the liberties which had already been taken with the pontifical authority.

Luther's own description of his feelings respecting the matters in dispute between Eckius and himself ought not to be omitted here. "My own case," says he, "is a notable example of the difficulty with which a man emerges from erroneous notions of long standing. How true is the proverb, Custom is a second nature! How true is that saying of Augustine, Habit, if not resisted, becomes necessity! I, who both publicly and privately had taught divinity with the greatest diligence for seven years, insomuch that I retained

in my memory almost every word of my lectures, was in fact at that time only just initiated into the knowledge and faith of Christ: I had only just learned that a man must be justified and saved, not by works, but by the faith of Christ; and, in regard to the pontifical authority, though I publicly maintained that the pope was not the head of the church by a DIVINE RIGHT, yet I stumbled at the very next step, namely, that the whole papal system was a Satanic invention. This I did not see, but contended obstinately for the pope's RIGHT, FOUNDED ON HUMAN REASONS; so thoroughly deluded was I by the example of others, by the title of HOLY CHURCH, and by my own habits. Hence I have learned to have more candour for bigoted papists, especially if they are not much acquainted with sacred, or perhaps even with profane history."

Various other points were debated in the disputation at Leipzig, but it is unnecessary to enter into the detail of them. Luther at this time acknowledged the existence of *purgatory*. On the subject of *indulgences*, Eckius happened to affirm that a sort of middle opinion ought to be held: "on the one hand they ought not to be condemned, and on the other they should not be entirely RELIED ON." Of this concession the acuteness of Luther did not fail to avail itself. "Never," says he, "did papal indulgences receive a more wretched and unfortunate support. If the same doctrine had been held at the time of vending them, the name of Luther would probably never have been heard of. Had the people been informed that the diplomas of indulgence were not to be RELIED ON, those who sold them might have died of hunger."

The victory in this theological contest was, as might have been expected, claimed on both sides. We may, however, mark a few undeniable facts bearing upon the question. The Duke George, after the disputation, treated Luther with unwonted respect and complaisance. Hoffman, the rector of the university, who was appointed judge between the parties, refused, notwithstanding his attachment to the papal side, to give any decision, but referred the question to the universities of Erfurt and Paris:* and these two learned bodies adopted the same policy. Finally, the bitterness and

* Very full and accurate reports of all that passed in the discussion were taken down, and are still in existence.

enmity of Eckius against his opponent are known to have been, from this period, increased beyond all bounds: which certainly savours more of a sense of humiliation and defeat than of conscious superiority and victory.

But notwithstanding the increased reputation with which the German theologian departed from the scene of controversy, it was easy to foresee that the court of Rome would now be more incensed against him than ever. He had indeed almost agreed with his adversary on some of the disputed points; he had even defended the authority of the Roman see, by placing it on the best foundation in his power; in short, he had exhibited a spirit of fidelity, moderation, and obedience: but all this could not expiate the unpardonable offence of searching the sacred oracles for himself, of confuting the papal pretensions to divine appointment and infallibility, and of resisting and exposing the flagitious practices of the agents and instruments of ecclesiastical rapine and tyranny.

Moreover popery was not a religion which betrayed only occasional defects and errors: it had long been a SYSTEM of corruption; all the parts of which were thoroughly connected with each other, and conspired together to deceive, defraud, and domineer over mankind. The members of the system sympathized with their head in a remarkable manner: they saw their very existence in its safety; and flew to its defence on the slightest appearances of danger. In return, the sovereign head of this vast body superintended the respective interests of all the members with exquisite care, and even with paternal solicitude. If, in some instances, the conduct of the Roman pontiffs does not exactly accord with this representation, the deviation will be found to have arisen, never from a relaxation or a change of principle, but from pride, contempt, indolence, and a sense of security. This was the case, as we have seen, with Leo X. in the very early stages of Lutheranism.

Striking examples of this reciprocal sort of sensibility and mutual protection were furnished, in the latter part of this year, 1519, by the two universities of Louvain and Cologne, and by the Cardinal de Tortosa. There can be no doubt that this dignified ecclesiastic, who himself succeeded Leo X. in the pontificate, acted, in all he did, by the direction of the court of Rome. He addressed the principal acade-

mies of Louvain, exciting them to give a public testimony of their disapprobation of the mischievous heresies of Luther: and accordingly a public decree of the rulers of the university was issued, in which they condemn many of Luther's propositions and doctrines, and pronounce them false, scandalous, and heretical. They sent one of Luther's books to the divines of Cologne, and requested them to censure its heretical contents in a public manner. These presently pronounced it full of errors and heresies; directed it to be suppressed; and declared that it ought to be burned, and the author of it obliged to make a public recantation. By management of this sort, the friends of the papacy, very soon after their defeat at Leipzig, obtained the sanction of two universities in favour of the reigning corruptions; while those learned seminaries, on their part, failed not to secure to themselves the approbation and applause of the Roman see.

Luther's heart, however, was not in these noisy and contentious scenes. The instruction of youth in divinity, and the preaching of the gospel of Christ, he considered as his proper business. He used to lament the peculiar infelicity of the age, by which he was obliged to waste in controversy so many hours that might have been far better employed in guiding souls into the way of salvation. That some good might result from the contentions at Leipzig, and that mankind might be less bewildered in the mazes of subtle disputation, this diligent servant of God determined to review carefully all his own positions, which had been the subject of debate with Eckius, and to publish them with concise explanations, and with arguments in their support, consisting of appeals to Scripture and ecclesiastical history.

"Search the Scriptures" is the precept which of all others seems to have most deeply impressed the anxious, inquisitive mind of Luther. And further, in his inquiries he never forgot that he himself was personally interested in the great truths of revealed religion. He studied the Bible, not through curiosity or the love of fame, but from a sense of the importance of its contents, and of his own dangerous situation. How little have those understood the real character of this reformer, who have looked on him as a turbulent, ambitious innovator, impelled by selfish and worldly motives! Nothing can be more affecting than the follow-

ing account which he himself gives of his own internal troubles. "However blameless a life I might lead as a monk, I experienced a most unquiet conscience: I perceived myself a sinner before God; I saw that I could do nothing to appease him; and I hated the idea of a just God that punishes sinners. I was well versed in all St. Paul's writings; and, in particular, I had a most wonderful desire to understand the epistle to the Romans. But I was puzzled with the expression, 'THEREIN is the righteousness of God revealed.' My heart rose almost with a sort of silent blasphemy against God: at least in secret I said, with great murmuring and indignation, Was it not enough that wretched man, already eternally ruined by the curse of original depravity, should be oppressed with every species of misery through the condemning power of the commandment, but that even through the GOSPEL God should threaten us with his anger and justice, and thereby add affliction to affliction?* Thus I raged with a troubled conscience. Over and over I revolved the above-mentioned passage to the Romans most importunately. My thirst to know the apostle's meaning was insatiable. At length, while I was meditating day and night on the words, and their connexion with what immediately follows, namely, 'the just shall live by faith,' it pleased God to have pity upon me, to open mine eyes, and to show me, that the righteousness of God, which is here said to be REVEALED in the gospel 'from faith to faith,' relates to the method by which God, in his mercy, justifies a sinner through faith, agreeably to what is written, 'The just shall live by faith.' Hence I felt myself a new man, and all the Scriptures appeared to wear a new aspect. I ran quickly through them as my memory enabled me; I collected together the leading terms; and I observed, in their meaning, a strict analogy, according to my new views. Thus, in many instances, the WORK of God means that which he works in us; and the power and wisdom of God mean the power and wisdom which his Spirit produces in the minds of the faithful; and in the same manner are to be understood the PATIENCE, the SALVATION, the GLORY of God. The expression, 'the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God,' now became as sweet to my mind

* He understood "the righteousness of God" here to mean his *justice* in punishing sin, instead of his merciful provision for pardoning it.—J. S.

as it had been hateful before: and this very passage of St. Paul proved to me the entrance into paradise."*

This interesting account of the steps by which Luther was led to evangelical light, in the important doctrine of justification by faith, evidently refers to what passed in his mind about the time of the celebrated disputation at Leipzig.

Eckius had maintained, that some of the actions of good men, and particularly their last actions in dying, were perfectly free from sin. Luther had too high ideas of the holiness of the divine law, and too deep a sense of the evil of sin, and of the depravity of human nature, to admit this position. Accordingly he opposed it with all his might, and used strong language in support of the contrary sentiment. "There has not," he said, "for these thousand years, been started a more mischievous, pestilential notion, than that God does not demand a perfect fulfilling of all his laws. This is directly to contradict Jesus Christ. God never alters his perfect law; though he pardons us when we break it. Observe, however, he does not pardon those who are asleep, but those who labour, those who fear, and who say with Job, 'I know thou wilt not hold me innocent.' Never suppose that God does not require an exact regard to every tittle of his law: such a notion will soon engender pride, and make you despise that grace, through which his holy law, as a schoolmaster, should compel you to seek deliverance."

The rigorous laws of history oblige us not to omit, that Luther, in the same treatise which contains the defence of his own conclusions against Eckius, hastily expressed a doubt of the divine authority of the epistle of St. James. Want of a just insight into the views of the inspired writer may account for this temerity, but will not excuse it. However, he seems not to have insisted on his scruples, much less to have persevered in them.

The publications of Luther were circulated throughout Germany, and were read with the greatest avidity by all ranks and orders. Eckius and other advocates of the Roman Catholic cause answered the heretic with great heat

* Luth. Op. præf. vol. i.

and indignation. Luther replied with the promptitude and precision, and also with the zeal and confidence, of a man who was perfectly master of the arguments on both sides of the questions in dispute, who felt deeply interested in the establishment of truth, and who had thoroughly examined the foundations of his opposition to the prevailing corruptions. By these means the discussions at Leipzig were detailed with minuteness, and continued with spirit; they everywhere became topics of common conversation; and, as Luther constantly appealed to plain sense, and the written word of God, the scholastic subtleties of Eckius lost their weight and reputation among the people. It is not difficult to see that the advantages, which in this way the cause of the reformation derived from this public contest and its consequences, must have been very considerable. Particular and important instances might be mentioned. The Elector of Saxony was the only prince who publicly favoured the reformation; and there is good reason to believe, that both his knowledge of the Scriptures and his kindness towards Luther were much increased by what he read and heard from others relative to the controversy in 1519. It appears from very authentic memoirs by Spalatinus, that the mind of Frederic had been much exercised about divine things, even before his Wittemberg theologian had dared to expose and withstand the corrupt practices of the Roman see. With much diligence and constant prayer he had read the word of God; and was extremely displeased with the usual modes of interpreting it. And when, through the grace of God and the instrumentality of Luther, some rays of evangelical light began to break forth, he opened his mind explicitly to his chaplain, Spalatinus, to this effect: "I have always indulged a secret hope, that in a short time we should be blessed with a purer knowledge of what we ought to believe." Meanwhile he gave attention to practical sermons, and read the Scriptures with the greatest delight; especially the four Gospels; from which he collected many excellent passages, and so impressed them on his memory, that whenever occasion required, he could readily apply them with great advantage and comfort. He used particularly to insist on that saying of our Lord in the fifteenth chapter of St. John, "Without me ye can do nothing." "He would dwell on this passage," says Spala-

tinus," more than on any other. He considered it as decisive against the vulgar notion of free-will. 'How can it possibly be,' said he, 'that mankind should be perfectly free from all corrupt bias, when Christ himself says, Without me ye can do nothing?'"

It may deserve notice, that soon after the conferences at Leipzig the Elector of Saxony had a severe illness; and that the industrious Luther, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his necessary employments, found time to compose a small tract, for the express purpose of comforting this good prince in his afflictions. The wisdom, sincerity, and the Christian affection which the author exhibited in this little treatise would, no doubt, have a tendency to increase the estimation in which he was already held by Frederic.

The celebrated Philip Melancthon, who is always numbered among the most illustrious instruments of the reformation, was present at the public disputations with Eckius. Some say that he placed himself near Carolstadt, and suggested so many things to him during the combat, that Eckius called out to him, "Philip, hold your tongue: mind your own business, and do not interfere with mine." He himself, however, tells us that he was a mere spectator and hearer; and that he sat among the crowd. As the dispute continued many days, the different accounts might perhaps appear sufficiently consistent, were we acquainted with all the circumstances. Melancthon concludes one of his letters to Œcolampadius in the following manner: "Eckius was much admired for his many and striking ingenuities. You know Carolstadt; he is certainly a man of worth and of extraordinary erudition. As to Luther, whom I have long known most intimately, his lively genius, his learning, and eloquence are the objects of my admiration; and it is impossible not to be in love with his truly sincere and pure Christian spirit." The conferences at Leipzig seem to have had a mighty effect in first determining this elegant scholar to employ his talents on theology. From this period he applied himself most intensely to the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the defence of pure Christian doctrine; and he is justly esteemed by Protestants to have been, under Divine Providence, the most powerful coadjutor of the Saxon reformer. His mild and peaceable temper, his aversion to schismatic contention, his reputation for

piety and for knowledge, and, above all, his happy art of exposing error and maintaining truth in the most perspicuous language—all these endowments concurred to render him eminently serviceable to the revival of the religion of Christ. Little did Eckius imagine that the public disputation, in which he had foreseen nothing but victory and exultation, and the downfall of Lutheranism, would give rise to another theological champion, who should contend for Christian truth and Christian liberty with the primitive spirit of an apostle.

CHAPTER V.

Proceedings of Miltitz—Writings of Luther and Melancthon —Luther's Letter to the Pope—His Situation in 1520.

The contest with Eckius, if we include the necessary preparations for the public debate at Leipzig, and also the continuation of the controversy, lengthened as it was by polemical tracts and letters, took up a considerable part of the year 1519. The abilities of this papal disputant had been candidly acknowledged by Melancthon, in a letter to his friend Œcolampadius; nevertheless the general account which that letter contained of the Leipzig conflict provoked Eckius so exceedingly, that, in the short space of three days he published a most acrimonious reply to its author; in which he affects to treat this learned and excellent reformer as a mere paltry grammarian, who might have some knowledge of Greek and Latin, but was unworthy the notice of a divine who had any good pretensions to theological erudition.

Melancthon's rejoinder to Eckius is elegant, acute, and temperate. It displays the scholar and the Christian; and at that time must have afforded no slight prognostic of the advantages which the church of Christ would one day derive from the writings of a person of such extraordinary talents and religious dispositions. It consists of only

five folio pages, but it did excellent service to the Lutheran cause.

In the mean time, Miltitz, the pope's nuncio, was not inattentive to the object of his commission. Early in this year he had agreed with Luther, that the points in dispute should be discussed before some learned and dignified ecclesiastic in Germany, such as the archbishop Elector of Treves, or the Bishop of Nuremberg. He had also personally conferred on this subject with the former prelate, who approved the plan, wrote to the Elector of Saxony in prosecution of it, and made Luther himself the fairest promises of safe-conduct and handsome treatment. Several things, however, concurred to postpone this measure, and to render the execution of it inexpedient; so that, as already related, the examination of the ecclesiastical matters was, with the concurrence of Miltitz himself, referred to the next German diet.

The Roman pontiff, it must be owned, had imposed on his nuncio a task which was not very easy to be performed. When this scheme of carrying Luther a prisoner to Rome had failed on account of the extreme popularity of the reformer, he appears to have done his utmost in the way of kindness and condescension to draw from him a recantation of his errors. He told the Elector of Saxony, that "peace and reconciliation were the objects of his wishes, but that he had great fears he should be driven to extremities. The pontiff," he said, "was highly indignant that Luther's cause had been so long delayed, and that the culprit in the mean time should be allowed to continue his offensive sermons."

Neither promises nor threatenings, however, materially affected the firm determinations of Martin Luther. When, through humane treatment, he was most softened and most inclined to make concessions, he never surrendered unwarily a single article of that belief which he thought authorized by the revealed WORD; and, when most pressed and most alarmed by tyrannical and insolent mandates, still he always resisted the antichristian proposal of unconditional retraction. Invariably he offered to submit his tenets to the authority of the Word of God, and continued to insist on the unreasonableness of requiring him to yield

implicitly to the mere dictates of arbitrary power. And, when he found that no other means were employed than those of imperious, pontifical despotism, he began more and more to suspect that the ecclesiastical monarch, who domineered in the church in so absolute and presumptuous a manner, must be the very Antichrist described in Scripture. But the conviction was gradual; the effect of sober thought and study. Sudden impressions on the imagination were little regarded by Luther. He particularly informs us, that he was not one of those who pretended to see at the first glance the full force and meaning of the Word of God.

Towards the end of this same year, 1519, Luther began to preach on the propriety of administering to the laity the communion in BOTH KINDS. This step gave great offence to George duke of Saxony, and produced a correspondence between him and his nephew, the elector, in which they conducted themselves according to their respective characters. George was bigoted in attachment to the superstitious maxims in which he had been educated, and wished to restrain Luther by the strong hand of despotic power. Frederic, both more enlightened and more conscientious, and at all times glad to promote the progress of evangelical truth, yet dreaded to be held up as a principal actor in scenes of so much contention and danger, which called for clearer views and more settled principles than he had yet acquired. In the mean time Luther steadily followed the track pointed out to him by a diligent and persevering study of the Holy Scriptures. He had broached the question concerning the communion in both kinds, and it was not his way to abandon for slight causes such religious inquiries as he conceived to be important. Early, therefore, in the year 1520 he defended his sermon concerning the nature of the sacrament, by publishing in the German language an explicit declaration of his sentiments on that subject. He did not insist upon the point as a matter of strict right, but contented himself, as yet, with expressing a wish that the church would pass a decree for the purpose of granting to the laity the communion in both kinds; supporting the course he now took by the example of Pius II., who, before he was chosen pope, had most earnestly desired

that a general council would decree liberty of marriage to the clergy.

These proceedings of the reformer did not altogether suit the temper of the elector's court, who again exhorted him to peace and caution. But the tender conscience of Luther was not to be lulled by specious prudential lessons concerning moderation and decency. We have not Spalatinus's letter on this occasion, but Luther's answer will afford the necessary information. "I cannot comprehend the notion of yourself, and of the friends you mention, that sacred theology may be taught without giving offence to the pontiffs. The Scriptures themselves, in the most explicit manner, lay open men's abuses of the Scriptures, which abuses the pontiffs cannot bear to have mentioned. I have given up myself to this work in the name of the Lord. May his will be done! The cause is that of mankind in general: let us, in faith and prayer, commit the event to God, and we shall be safe. For what can our adversaries do? Will they murder us? They cannot do that TWICE. Will they asperse us as heretics? Was not Christ himself treated as a malefactor? When I contemplate HIS sufferings, I blush for shame that my trials should be thought so considerable, when in reality they are nothing. Cease then your attempts to divert me from my purpose. My enemies may rage, but I shall smile in security. I am determined to abide the event, and not to give way to any unbecoming fears. I should, indeed, be sorry to involve the prince in my concerns; otherwise, at this moment the world should see a very explicit publication of my sentiments, a publication which, though it might still more provoke the FURIES, would at the same time expose their folly."

In much the same spirit of determined resolution, and of confidence in the justice of his cause, he wrote to the new emperor, Charles V., imploring, however, in modest and submissive terms, the assistance and protection "of so great a prince." "I humbly beseech your most serene majesty," he says, "that, as you bear the sword for the praise of the good and the punishment of the bad, you would deign to take under the shadow of your wings the cause of truth. As to myself, I crave your support not one moment longer than while I shall appear to have reason on my side. Abandon me the instant I am found impious or heretical. All I beg

is, that my doctrines, whether true or false, may not be condemned unheard and without examination. If your most sacred majesty, by your interposition, should prevent the exercise of tyrannical power, such a conduct would be worthy of your royal and imperial throne, would adorn your government, and consecrate to posterity the age in which you live."

It may be almost superfluous to mention how entirely these letters and declarations of our reformer harmonize with the representation which we have given of his motives; and a similar observation is applicable to several other of his performances, which made their appearance about the same time.

To the censures of the divines of Louvain and Cologne, he published a very animated reply, following their strictures article by article. "Antichrist," he said, "could not be far off, when men set up themselves so impudently above the written word of God."

Again: in the negotiations between Miltitz and Luther, it had been agreed that the latter should publish a concise protestation of his faith, and of his firm adherence to the Roman Catholic church; and that he should endeavour to express himself in the most obsequious and conciliatory terms. This protestation came out in January, 1520, and runs very much in the same strain as the letter to the emperor, which is already before the reader.

At this time also, influenced in part, we may suppose, by respect for the Saxon court, he wrote modest and submissive letters to two German prelates. The Archbishop of Mentz he entreated not to give credit to his calumniators, who, he said, consisted of two classes; one of which had never read his writings, and the other was actuated altogether by the most bitter animosity. On the same day, and to the same purport, he addressed the Bishop of Mersburg. The archbishop replied, that as he had never read his writings, he was not disposed to censure them; but it was with great grief that he heard of the violent disputes which were carried on. He highly approved, however, Luther's teaching the great truths of Scripture, provided he gave his lectures in a spirit of peace and obedience to the established church. The answer of the Bishop of Mersburg is concise, and borders on severity. He styles Luther, however, his

"venerable brother." The Archbishop of Mentz had addressed him as "honourable, religious, and beloved in Christ."

But, besides these, there are other writings of Luther, of nearly the same date, and of much greater importance. His celebrated letter to the pontiff, Leo X., in the year 1520, and his treatise on Christian Liberty, were the effect of the last effort of Miltitz, to produce a reconciliation between the reformer and the court of Rome. As Luther was an ecclesiastic of the Augustinian order, Miltitz endeavoured to persuade the fathers of that fraternity to depute from their general assembly, then held in Saxony, some persons who should persuade their refractory brother to desist from his opposition to his superiors. This measure was tried; and Luther received the deputation with the most kind and dutiful attention; and very soon afterward he had a friendly conference with Miltitz himself. A distinct account of this part of the negotiation of the pope's nuncio is contained in the following letter of Luther to Spalatinus; and it is the more expedient that we should have recourse to this authentic document, because the whole affair has been miserably misrepresented by papal writers. "Miltitz and myself," says Luther, "met at Lichtenberg; and we have agreed upon the following terms, from which HE entertains the most sanguine hopes. I am to print and publish some little tract, and preface it with a letter to the pontiff. That letter is to contain a narrative of my proceedings, and an assurance that I never intended any personal affront to his holiness. At the same time, I am allowed to lay a heavy load of blame upon Eckius. As this plan is founded in the most perfect truth, it is impossible that I should have the smallest objection to it. In the most submissive manner, I mean to propose silence on both sides, in order that nothing of a conciliatory nature may be omitted on my part. I need not tell you, that it has always been my wish to bring about peace. I shall have every thing ready in a few days. If the event should answer our hopes, all will be well; but if it should not, I still have no doubt that good will be the consequence."

It must be owned, however, that it was no easy matter for the Saxon reformer, in his present state of mind and circumstances, to devise an epistle to a haughty pontiff,

which should exhibit a becoming sense of subordination, do justice to his own conscience and cause, and at the same time escape the animadversion and censure of his enemies. But the honest mind of Luther, by simplicity and plain-dealing, often effected that which it would have puzzled an intriguing minister of state to compass by the most artful policy. He has not, indeed, on this occasion, escaped the opposite charges of hypocritical courtesy, and of audacious insolence; but as these have been made only by bigoted and ill-informed zealots of the Roman religion, we may dismiss the slander without further notice. The epistle to Leo, as well as the treatise on Christian Liberty, which accompanied it, are extant; and are lasting monuments of the good sense, integrity, and firmness of their author. They also merit particular attention, on account of their being among the last, if not the very last, of Luther's writings, in which he professes obedience to the Romish church and to pontifical authority.

The truly excellent and judicious Seckendorf calls on all the bitterest enemies of the reformation to lay aside their prejudices, to read over and over again Luther's last letter to the pontiff, and not to stifle the honest convictions of their judgment and conscience. They cannot, he thinks, but admit how well devised it was to stir up the mind of Leo to a serious investigation and correction of abuses. It treated the pope himself with the greatest tenderness and respect; while the rash, impolitic proceedings of Cajetan and Eckius were exposed in just strains of censure and reproach. In the exordium, Luther declares, that, though he had been compelled, by the persecutions of such as flattered his holiness, to appeal from the Roman see to a future council, yet he had never harboured the least ill-will to the pontiff, but had always prayed to God to bestow upon his person and his see every kind of blessing. He owns that he had treated the impious doctrines of his adversaries with much severity; and he was so far from repenting of what he had done in that respect, that, whatever man's judgment might be, he intended zealously to persevere in the same practice. The pope's SEE, or, in other words, the COURT OF ROME, neither Leo nor any man living could deny, was more corrupt than Babylon and Sodom. Luther declares that he considered that court as desperately wicked: he detested it; he

had withstood it, and should continue to withstand it as long as he preserved any thing of the spirit of the gospel. It was a most licentious den of thieves: Antichrist could add nothing to its impiety. "What can a pope do," he asks, "among such monsters of wickedness, even supposing him to be supported by three or four learned and excellent cardinals? He is like a lamb in the midst of wolves, as a Daniel among the lions, or as an Ezekiel among scorpions." He most sincerely wishes that Leo could be induced to live on his patrimony, or on some petty ecclesiastical preferment, and resign the pontificate, which, in reality, was now only fit for those sons of perdition who flattered him on account of his glorious pre-eminence. He entreats the pope, that he might be permitted to say a word in support of his own cause, and also to point out those who are the real enemies of his holiness. He takes it for granted that Leo was well acquainted with the proceedings of his imprudent, unfortunate, nay, unfaithful legate, Cardinal Cajetan. This man, he says, might have composed all the differences with a single word. He had only to prescribe to Luther's adversaries the same silence which, on that condition, Luther had promised to preserve. Whereas, not content with this fair compromise, he began to justify licentious practices of Luther's enemies, and to insist upon a recantation from him, even when the pontifical mandates by no means warranted so tyrannical a demand. Thus the pleasing hopes of an accommodation had been ruined, and the dissension much exasperated. All the mischief which followed was to be ascribed entirely to Cajetan and not to Luther, who in vain had exerted every nerve to procure peace and silence. Charles Miltitz, he says, had used his utmost endeavours to repair the harm which had been caused by the pride and temerity of Cajetan; but had been prevented from bringing matters to a successful issue by the unseasonable disputations of Eckius. This was the name of the pope's real enemy. He was a man who did not seek truth, but glory; a man who, by falsehood, pretence, and artifice, had, from the beginning of these troubles, done every thing he could to confound men's judgments and inflame their passions. Lastly, Luther informs the pope, that some principal persons of his own order, at the particular instance of Miltitz, had requested him to address his holiness in respectful terms;

to defend, at the same time, his own innocence with becoming humility; and to express a hope, that the native goodness of Leo. X. would devise some expedient by which the misunderstanding between them might be prevented from being pushed to the last extremity. He says, this measure so entirely harmonized with what he had always offered and wished, that now, with the greatest humility, he besought his holiness to impose silence upon those flatterers who, while they pretended peace, were enemies of peace. But no person, he adds, must desire him to recant, unless he intended to increase the dissensions. He further distinctly states, that he could not permit any rules to be prescribed to him for the interpretation of the word of God: the word of God ought not to be fettered. If these two points were granted, there was nothing that he would not most willingly either do or suffer.

The small treatise on Christian Liberty, which accompanied this letter to the pope, was regarded by its author as a compendium of the Christian life. He premises two axioms, which in appearance contradict each other, but which in reality, he said, would be found perfectly consistent. 1. A Christian man is of all men the most completely free: and is subject to none. 2. A Christian man is of all men the most ready to serve others, and is subject to every one.

In illustration of the former, he shows that the Christian is justified, and filled with all good, and made a true son of God, by faith alone. "Yet, while he remains upon earth in this mortal state, he must keep his body in subjection, and perform those duties which result from an intercourse with his fellow-creatures. Here then it is, in the Christian scheme, that WORKS are to be placed; here it is that sloth and indolence are forbidden; and here the convert is bound to take care that, by fasting, watching, labour, and other suitable means, his body be so exercised and subdued to the spirit, that it may obey and conform to the inward and new man, and not rebel and obstruct the operations of faith, as it is naturally inclined to do, if not restrained. For the inward man, being created after the image of God, by faith rejoices through Christ, in whom he possesses so great treasure; and hence his only employment and delight are to serve God freely in love."

The second axiom he elucidates by describing the secret

reflections of a truly humble Christian. "Behold, on me, a miserable mortal and worthy of condemnation, God, of his mere pity and kindness, without the least merit on my part, hath bestowed all the riches of his righteousness and salvation, so that I no more stand in need of any thing except faith, by which I may appropriate and secure these blessings. To such a Father, who overwhelms me with his inestimable loving-kindness, must I not liberally, cheerfully, and with my whole heart do every thing which I shall know to be pleasing in his sight? I therefore, after the example of Christ, and as far as I am capable of imitating him, would give up myself to my neighbour, as Christ hath given up himself for me: I am determined to do nothing in this life except what I shall see to be conducive to his good, since by faith I myself abound in all blessings through Christ."

Evangelical truth, we may here remark, appears to stand between two precipices, equally destructive—self-righteousness and antinomianism. To describe it in such a manner as to leave it liable to neither of these imputations is no easy matter. Even those who, by sound experience, are practical adepts in the gospel-mystery, are not always happy in conveying wholesome instruction to others. Language itself is apt to sink under the weight of the real doctrines of grace, and proves unequal to the description of that spiritual understanding which furnishes the Christian heart with conceptions peculiarly scriptural. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that the man who, after a silence of many centuries, first undertook to arrange and methodize the doctrines of the gospel according to the principles of the New Testament, should not always be able to do full justice to his subject? In explaining, however, the principles of Christian liberty, and in guarding them against evils and abuses on the right hand and on the left, Luther seems, on the whole, to have preserved the due medium; and it is a marvellous instance of Divine goodness, that the first completely evangelical reformer could unite such uncommon vehemence of spirit with so much good sense, and so great nicety of judicious discrimination.

His present work, however, has not escaped the censure of papal zealots. "He represents faith," says Maimbourg, "as doing every thing. It justifies us, it makes us free, it saves us; and all this without the help of good works,

which are of no use towards salvation, even though they proceed from faith." And the more candid Du Pin prefers a similar charge against the tract. The fact is, men in all ages, and under all circumstances, naturally dislike the pure doctrines of grace; they are "ignorant of God's righteousness;" they "go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. It was, I conceive, a strong conviction of this natural dislike, which induced the author of the treatise we have now reviewed to admonish his readers, at the conclusion, as follows: There is need of prayer to God, that he would be pleased to incline us towards himself and make us teachable, and to write his laws in our hearts, according to his promise; without which we are ruined for ever. For, unless he himself inwardly teach us this wisdom, which is so hidden in mystery, mere nature will constantly disapprove it and reject it. The reason is, nature looks on it as foolishness, and takes offence at it." This is a most valuable observation of Luther. He had his eye on the great essential doctrine of justification by faith, which was always his favourite theme. He had taken peculiar pains to secure it both from abuse and from misconception. It was only a little before that he had said, "We are so far from rejecting good works, that we teach the necessity of them, and lay very great stress on their being done. We never say any thing against them on their own account; it is the impious notion that they can justify, which we condemn." Still he well knew that nothing he could say would be effectual to reach the hearts, or even the understandings of mankind. Still they would infallibly exclaim, "This is a dangerous tenet: this is faith without works." He therefore wisely admonishes us to pray for a divine influence; and he beseeches God to "show the light of his countenance, that his way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations."

If the least doubt could be entertained whether the Saxon reformer was a man of acute understanding and indefatigable industry, it would be easy to bring proof of both from several of his excellent publications during the years 1519, 1520, which have not been mentioned. The established hierarchy had, as it could not fail to have, many supporters.

The heretical innovator was attacked from all quarters; and Luther always answered his enemies with perspicuity and vigour, and in several instances with great brilliancy of wit and poignant sarcasm: never was it more truly said of any man that he was himself a host.

Doubtless this extraordinary servant of God is the object of our admiration, much more than of our pity; nevertheless, when I view the champion of that Christian liberty which we at this day enjoy, calumniated, irritated, and provoked, hunted down, and almost struggling for his life, it is with high satisfaction that I find the eloquent pen of Melancthon beginning about this time to appear in reply to some of Luther's adversaries. With what spirit he was treading in the steps of his academical friend may in some measure be inferred from his answer to a declamatory composition which was published at Leipzig, under the name of Thomas Radin. "The church," he says, addressing himself to the princes, "the church appeals to your faith and piety. Enslaved as she is by philosophy and human traditions, she entreats you to emancipate her at length from her twofold Babylonian servitude." In this publication he makes the following affecting observation on the corruption of manners prevalent in the universities. Would to God that it applied to no such seminaries of our own times! "I have seen," says he, "some young men, not ill-disposed, who would have wished that they had lived and died in total ignorance of letters, rather than to have purchased knowledge at so dear a rate; who carried nothing away with them from the universities except a guilty conscience."

If the conduct of the Elector Frederic had been influenced only by prudential and political considerations, he might seem to have had sufficient temptation at this period to induce him entirely to withdraw his protection from Luther. Valentine Deitleben, his agent at Rome, informed him that he could bring nothing to a successful issue with the Roman pontiff; the reason of which, whatever the pretence might be, he believed was the offence taken at the spread of Luther's doctrines, and the report of the encouragement and assistance given to him by the elector. Frederic, in reply, in addition to his usual representations of his own conduct, made the following statement:—"The doc-

trines of Luther have taken deep root everywhere, and the effect must be done away by perspicuous and indisputable testimonies of Scripture, not by ecclesiastical processes contrived to oppress him, and to excite terror; otherwise, it is most probable that the bitterest animosities and the most horrible and destructive convulsions will arise in Germany, which can be of no service either to his holiness the pope or to any one else."

The pontiff, however, and his cardinals continued to despise every kind of salutary advice; and it is well known how the subsequent events corresponded with the intimations of the sagacious Frederic. The counsellors to whom Leo now surrendered the direction of his mind were such as Prierias, Cajetan, and Eckius, the latter of whom, in particular, breathed nothing but vengeance against Luther. Instead of profiting therefore by the prudent suggestions made to him, he affected to understand the elector's letter of instruction to his agent in a sense directly opposite to the real one. He extolled that prince in the highest terms of commendation, for having opposed the wicked attempts of Martin Luther; suppressed his knowledge of any protection that had been afforded to the heretic by the court of Saxony; and with incredible effrontery and dissimulation, desired the elector to be assured that his spirited conduct on the present emergency, in resisting innovation and supporting the orthodox faith, had very much increased that good opinion which the Roman see had always entertained of his distinguished merit! and he concluded with informing the elector that he had sent him a copy of the determination of the court of Rome—a bull, to be noticed ere long, in which Luther was condemned; and that he now relied upon his highness, in the first place, to exhort the heretic to recant with a becoming humility; and then, if he persisted in his wickedness beyond the term of sixty days, to seize his person and keep him safe for the disposal of his holiness.

This correspondence affords a curious specimen of that sort of intercourse which frequently takes place among persons in elevated situations, where the parties perfectly understand each other, though they by no means express in words the ideas they intend to communicate. But let us now hear the sentiments of one who neither loved courts nor practised their arts. When Luther was informed by Spalatinus

of the representations made by Deitleben from Rome, his answer was in substance as follows:—"It is entirely agreeable to my wishes, that our illustrious prince should separate himself from my cause as he has hitherto done, and expose me to the public, either to be instructed or convicted of error. Let them punish Prierias, Eckius, Cajetan, and others, who have raised these disturbances in the church, merely to enhance their own consequence and reputation. Whatever I have done, or now do, I do by compulsion. I am always ready to be quiet, provided they do not insist upon evangelical truth lying dormant. If they will but permit Christians to walk in the path of salvation without persecution, I will give up every thing else, and that spontaneously. This is all I ask. What can be more equitable? I ask not for a cardinal's hat, nor for gold, nor for any thing besides, that is at this day deemed precious at Rome. You will observe, that a mind thus disposed can neither fear threats nor be allured by promises."

Several circumstances however occurred about the beginning of the year 1520, which tended greatly to encourage the Saxon reformer. The appearance of Melancthon against the papal advocates has already been mentioned. Several elaborate epistles of Erasmus also, written about the same period to persons of learning and eminence, represent Luther in the most respectful light; and these powerfully tended to defend him against his persecutors. Some German noblemen likewise, who had imbibed Lutheran principles, and had heard of the dangers to which the reformer's life was exposed from the violent machinations of bigoted Roman Catholics, stepped forward at this crisis, and generously offered him their protection. Among these is particularly recorded the name of Sylvester Schaumburg, a Franconian knight, who sent his son to Wittemberg, to be instructed by Melancthon; and at the same time, by a letter, most earnestly requested Luther to accept an asylum in his neighbourhood, where he might be preserved from all harm by Schaumburg himself, and a hundred other noblemen, till the storm was over, and the doctrinal points had undergone a legal examination. Luther had the prudence to transmit to his friend Spalatinus the knight's letter, for the inspection of the elector, and along with it a very significant note, which shows how much his hopes and confidence were improved upon receiving in-

formation that he had so many friends in Germany. "If it would not," says he, "give the prince too much trouble, I could wish he would be pleased to give a hint to his friend Cardinal St. George, at Rome, respecting the contents of the enclosed letter from Sir Sylvester Schaumburg, that my enemies may see that they will only make bad worse by driving me from Wittemberg; for there are those, not in Bohemia, but in the middle of Germany, who both can and will protect me against all their ecclesiastical thunders. *There*, most certainly, I should expose the Roman errors and abuses with greater severity than I have thought it prudent to do at Wittemberg, where the authority of the prince and the interests of the university are some restraint to my proceedings. As far as respects myself the die is cast. Papal wrath and papal favour are equally despised by me. I no longer wish to communicate with the Romanists, or to be reconciled to them. Let them condemn me and burn my books; and if, in return, I do not publicly condemn and burn the whole mass of pontifical law, it will be because I cannot find fire. They will not succeed in this contest. The Lord, who knows me to be a most grievous sinner, will, I doubt not, finish his own work, either through me as his instrument, or through another."

At the time when he wrote this note our reformer was in various ways receiving almost daily information of the violent proceedings adopted against his doctrines, his writings, and his person;* he soon expected to hear of a cruel and unjust sentence; and it behooved him to make some provision for his safety. Under these circumstances, the generous proposal of protection by Schaumburg and his associates must have been grateful news. A short time before its arrival he had written to the same friend in a less daring strain, wishing that he might be permitted to be silent upon the disputed points, repeating the expression of his readiness to be so, provided silence were also imposed on his opponents. But even this letter he concludes with the following declaration: "However, I desire that one thing may be taken along with what I here say, namely, that if I may not be released from the office of teaching and explaining the word of God, most assuredly I will not be fettered in the dis-

* Du Pin.

charge of my ministry. I am already sufficiently burdened with my sins; I mean not to add to them the unpardonable crime of remaining in the ministry and being unfaithful in it; of being guilty of an impious silence, and of the neglect of divine truth and of so many thousand precious souls."

Such appears to have been the pious and truly benevolent determination of the man whom an elegant historian, with most deplorable prejudice, in direct opposition to the facts, accuses of indulging a spirit of selfish resentment when he began to oppose the practice of indulgences.*

CHAPTER VI.

Luther's Writings—Damnatory Bull against him—State of Europe—Luther's Commentary on Galatians.

THE active spirit of Luther was continually engaged in the investigation of evangelical truth. Hearing of the design of the court of Rome to publish his condemnation, and discovering more and more of the abuses of popery, he found himself compelled to proceed in his opposition to the established system. He saw no possibility of retreating with a safe conscience; all his offers of peace and reconciliation were rejected with contempt and disdain; and his bitterest enemies were countenanced and applauded by the pontiff. He determined therefore to do his utmost to open the

* Hume, Henry VIII.—Mr. Hume, besides his odious misrepresentation respecting indulgences before noticed, makes not the least scruple to speak of the reformation in the following manner:—"Not that reason bore any considerable share in opening men's eyes with regard to the impostures of the Romish church." "Many of the reformers adopted an enthusiastic strain of devotion, which admitted of no observances, rites, or ceremonies, but placed all merit in a mysterious species of faith, in inward vision, rapture, and ecstasy." Soon after he says of Leo X., his "sound judgment, moderation, and temper were well qualified to retard its progress." I will venture to affirm, that it will not be easy to produce, from any writer of tolerable reputation, assertions that have so little foundation in fact as these.

eyes of all ranks and orders of men respecting the abominable practices of the Roman hierarchy.

Accordingly, about the middle of the year 1520, he published, in his native language, a little treatise, in which he addressed the emperor and German nobility on the necessity of a reformation in the church. In this work Luther collects a history of the numerous corruptions which in the course of many ages had crept in; and in particular he describes the miseries which Germany had suffered from the various wars that had been raised against the emperors by intriguing and ambitious pontiffs, for the purpose of increasing their wealth and power. The treatise comprehends likewise a selection of distinct articles concerning the reformation of ecclesiastical affairs, the encouragement of useful seminaries of learning, and the study of theology.

Thus by a persevering opposition, equally firm and prudent, the Saxon reformer gradually subverted the foundations of popery; and Germany saw with admiration the display of a profound practical knowledge in ecclesiastical subjects, in a person whose hours had chiefly been spent in the schools and the monastery. Some friends of Luther, however, there were, who were startled at the boldness of the publication, and considered it as the signal for war; but the more thinking and judicious part of mankind looked on this measure as the wisest step which, even in a mere worldly and prudential light, could possibly have been taken, to render contemptible and abortive the expected fulminations of the Roman court.

In the autumn of the same year he printed his celebrated tract on the Babylonish Captivity of the church. He begins this book with observing, that he was so constantly exercised in disputes and contentions, that, whether he would or would not, he was compelled to become daily more learned: and with ingenuously acknowledging that he now most sincerely repented of the concessions he had made two years ago respecting the nature of indulgences. He could not, he said, at that time, think of rejecting indulgences entirely, so general was the consent of mankind in their favour, and so addicted was he himself to the superstitions of Romish tyranny. But he now understood them to be mere impostures, the object of which was to rob men of their money, and to pervert the faith of the gospel. He

wished now to commit to the flames every line that he had written on that subject, and to substitute in its place the simple proposition, "Indulgences are the wicked contrivances of Romish flatterers." In this animated composition, Luther, probably for the first time, calls the papacy the kingdom of Babylon.

Notwithstanding the generous and seasonable protection which had lately been offered to Luther by the German nobility, his real situation at this time was extremely perilous. The bull of Leo X., which was to put an end to the dissensions in the church, and perhaps to the existence of the reformer, was daily expected in Germany; and Luther might well doubt whether the cautious elector would not shrink from the danger of hazarding an open rupture with the Roman see, whose enormous power had already crushed some of the most potent German emperors. That excellent prince might not be able to support him in an avowed contest of force, though by prudential and dexterous management he had hitherto shielded him from mischief. In this state of suspense and peril, it was impossible for Luther to remain unconcerned; yet he discovered no symptoms either of timidity or remissness. He continued to vindicate his own conduct and opinions with spirit, and to inveigh against those of his adversaries with vehemence.

After the court of Rome had hesitated almost three years, during all which time "the word of God had grown and multiplied," on the 15th of June, 1520, Leo X. published that famous damnatory bull against Luther, which in the event proved so fatal to the established hierarchy. Forty-one propositions extracted out of the reformer's works were therein condemned as heretical, scandalous, and offensive to pious ears; all persons were forbidden to read his writings, upon pain of excommunication; such as had any of them in their custody were commanded to burn them; and he himself, if he did not within sixty days send or bring his retraction in form to Rome, was pronounced an obstinate heretic, was excommunicated, and delivered unto Satan for the destruction of his flesh; and all secular princes were required, under pain of incurring the same censures, and of forfeiting all their dignities, to seize his person, that he might be punished as his crimes deserved.

There was a time when the most powerful monarchs

would have trembled at such a sentence. That time was now passed; and though Eckius and his party triumphed, as if by one decisive blow they had at length annihilated Lutheranism, the more judicious and dispassionate part of mankind beheld this rash step of the Roman court as the certain prognostic of increased tumults and distractions.

The bull met with different kinds of reception in different parts of Germany. In some places the publication of it was delayed, in others it was in part eluded; and so odious were the proceedings of the court of Rome in this business, that fear alone dictated to many a reluctant and partial obedience to its mandates. Even at Leipzig, under the dominion of Duke George, Eckius experienced a very violent opposition to the promulgation of the bull; and at Erfurt it was forcibly wrested from him, torn in pieces, and thrown into the river by armed academics, who assembled together and besieged his house for that purpose.

The reader will doubtless be gratified to see the very first thoughts and resolutions of Luther on this memorable occasion, as he communicated them to Spalatinus, on the 13th of October. "At last the Roman bull is come; and Eckius is the bearer of it. I treat it with contempt. I consider it in all respects as a machination of Eckius, and I attack it as impious and false. You see that the express doctrines of Christ himself are here condemned; that no cause is assigned why I should be deemed a heretic; and lastly, that I am called, not to a hearing, but to a retraction. I shall however as yet not seem to know that it is a papal bull, but treat it as a fiction and forgery. Oh, how I wish that the Emperor Charles V. would act like a man; and in behalf of Christ oppose the emissaries of Satan! On my own account I have no fear. Let the will of the Lord be done! Neither do I see what steps the prince should take; perhaps a silent connivance is his truest wisdom. I feel myself now more at liberty, being assured that the popedom is antichristian, and the seat of Satan. Erasmus writes, that the emperor's court overflows with beggars and dependants, all disposed to promote tyrannical principles; so that there is no hope in Charles. No wonder! *Trust not in princes, or in any child of man, for there is no help in them.*"

Some time after, Spalatinus, who had been deputed to Wittemberg, writes, "I found him (Luther) altogether

cheerful, and even in high spirits. He is determined to write against the bull, but with moderation, for the elector's sake. He has resolved, as soon as he hears of the burning of his own books, to treat the pontifical decrees in the same way. I have seen more than thirty letters addressed to him from Suabia, Switzerland, and Pomerania. They are written by princes and persons distinguished by rank and learning, and are all of them full of pious and consolatory reflections. Students flock to the university. I myself have seen six hundred attend the lectures of Melancthon, and four hundred those of Luther. Lastly, neither the parish church, nor that of the monastery, is large enough to contain the multitudes who crowd to hear the sermons of Luther."

Historians on both sides of the question censure without mercy the imprudent conduct of the Roman court, in almost all their transactions with Luther. They also suggest ingenious plans of different kinds,* by which, if the papal counsels had been steadily directed, they suppose all opposition to the reigning ecclesiastical powers might have been crushed in the bud. The pious reader, however, will take care always to keep a reverential eye on the overruling hand of Providence, which, for the wickedness of men, often "shuts their eyes that they cannot see, and makes their ears heavy that they cannot hear."† If this important idea, so constantly enjoined in Scripture, be totally neglected or but carelessly regarded, the study of history, otherwise so beneficial an employment, may easily exert a malignant influence over both the understanding and the affections. An habitual attention to secondary causes, where the mind has not obtained from divine revelation any true knowledge of the first grand cause, nor been duly humbled on account of internal depravity, has been observed in many instances sadly to increase a skeptical, profane, and atheistical way of thinking. On the contrary, when the God of the Scriptures is the God in whom we firmly believe and humbly trust, and whose attributes we expect to see displayed in his government of the world, we then derive useful lessons of instruction from the contemplation of almost every event, which either we ourselves diligently observe, or which is faithfully recorded by human industry.

* Robertson, Charles V. † Isaiah vi. 10.

In effect, the religious principle is the key to true wisdom, and to true happiness; the door of both is shut to the profane unbeliever. Those then who believe that when the heart of a wicked man, as of Pharaoh, is declared in Scripture to be hardened by the Lord, a previous state of great sin and impenitence is the true cause of so awful a judgment, will have no difficulty in comprehending why the Roman pontiff and his advisers should appear to have had their hearts hardened in all their contests with Luther. The reformer's cause from the beginning was the cause of God and his Christ; and the Roman see had well nigh filled up the measure of its iniquity. On the supposition of any other principle than a judicial hardening of the heart through Divine vengeance, the strange infatuation of Leo X. seems altogether unaccountable. Most certainly he was extremely anxious to have the bull of Luther's condemnation well received among the nations: but mark the means which a pontiff so celebrated for penetration and dexterity employed to bring about so important a purpose. 1. The bull itself was ill calculated either to convince or to silence. The Holy Scriptures had begun to be read in Germany. To these Luther constantly appealed, and to nothing else. By these he constantly demanded that his doctrines should be tried. The Elector Frederic had distinctly intimated to the pope, how dangerous it would be, in the business of Luther, to neglect the testimony of Scripture, and to rely merely on ecclesiastical censures. Instead, however, of paying any attention to scriptural arguments, Leo invokes Jesus Christ, St. Peter, St. Paul, and all the saints of heaven, and in the most pompous and unmeaning language entreats them to preserve the purity of the sacred church. He then declares that his cardinals and his generals of the regular orders, with other divines and doctors of law, had agreed with him in condemning and rejecting forty-one propositions of Luther, and in pronouncing them false, heretical, and scandalous. This was not to appease, but to exasperate, the discontents of the Germans. 2. But besides the offensive contents of the bull, it was brought into Germany by Eckius himself, the avowed enemy of the reformer. A step more indiscreet than this, or more inflammatory in its tendency, as is acknowledged even by the popish advocate Pallavicini, could scarcely have been de-

vised. Eckius all the while pretended to be an involuntary agent in the business. One of his private letters, however, happened to fall into Luther's hands; who instantly published its contents, and at the same time made pertinent remarks on the hypocritical and interested motives of the writer, which were completely laid open by this accident. Thus the credit of Eckius in Saxony was reduced to the very lowest ebb. 3. Nothing could be worse calculated to effect Leo's design than the letter which he addressed to the Elector of Saxony. A weak unprincipled character might easily have been seduced from the path of duty by the insincere, adulatory expressions of the pontiff. But the firm, penetrating, conscientious mind of Frederic was more than a match for Leo and all his profligate advisers. This excellent prince despised their flattery as he detested their hypocrisy; and, though by nature and habit uncommonly cautious and temperate, he appears to have discovered unequivocal marks of dissatisfaction and displeasure. Matters were indeed now come to a crisis. Either the hero of the reformation was to be abandoned to the rage and malice of his enemies, or the decisions of an iniquitous and despotical hierarchy must be withstood with vigour and resolution. The honest side of this alternative might be attended with danger: but, happily for the cause of Christian liberty, Frederic feared God, increased in the knowledge of true religion, and grew bolder in its support.

To the same sort of infatuation must we ascribe the rash and insolent demands which Aleander, joint-nuncio with Eckius, was directed to make of the elector. This prince was at Cologne, on his return from the coronation of the new emperor Charles V., when Aleander, having obtained an audience, opened his commission in the following manner. He said, the pope had intrusted himself and Eckius with the affair of Luther, which was of great consequence to the empire and to the whole Christian world. He did not doubt that the elector would imitate the emperor and the other princes who had received the pope's determination with respect. In Leo's name he insisted on two things; that Frederic should cause all Luther's books to be burned; and that he should either put the author of them to death, or imprison him till he could be sent to Rome. The elector, after due consideration, and by the advice of his

privy counsellors, replied with great prudence, firmness, and spirit. He complained that during his absence from his own dominions Eckius had brought several of his subjects into trouble and danger; reminded Aleander of the proceedings already adopted with respect to Luther, under the direction of Cajetan and Militz, and of the ingenuous part he himself had acted towards those nuncios; intimated that it was very possible that vast multitudes of all ranks and orders might adhere to Luther; expressed his surprise, after his past conduct, at the extraordinary demands now made upon him; and observed, that it had never yet been made to appear that Luther's books deserved to be burned. "When I am once convinced that they do," he added, "I will not fail to do every thing that becomes a Christian prince." And in these sentiments Frederic persisted, notwithstanding all the instances of Aleander and Caraccioli (another nuncio to the emperor), till the former, anxious to retire with as good a grace as he could, declared, "That the pope, having no wish to embrue his hands in the blood of Luther, had never designed to proceed against his person; but that in regard to Caraccioli and himself, they had no choice left to them; they were bound to obey the injunctions of the bull, and in so doing, to burn the books of Martin Luther."

It required no little effrontery to make that part of this declaration which regarded the person of Luther; for it was in direct contradiction to the demands which the nuncio himself, in the pope's name, had so recently made, as well as to both the spirit and the letter of the bull itself. Nor were his representations concerning the emperor borne out by fact: for, though he repeatedly pressed that monarch to take part against Luther, and to give full effect to the pope's bull, Charles, whatever might be his real sentiments or wishes, at present thought proper to refuse compliance with the demands for the seizure of Luther's person. In fact, he was under the greatest obligations to Frederic, being actually indebted to this prince for his recent election to the imperial dignity. In regard to the burning of the heresiarch's writings, he appears to have at last given way to the solicitations of Aleander, who, having so far carried his point with the new emperor, attended him after his coronation from city to city, filling the Netherlands with

the smoke and flames of innumerable books and papers, and threatening all ranks and orders with the papal vengeance. A like partial submission to the pope's bull was obtained by Aleander in the ecclesiastical electorates of Cologne and Mentz. The hatred of this furious popish executioner towards Luther was cordial and extreme. He evidently disliked *the man*, for the soundness and purity of his morals. He is known to have said, "It is impossible to soften Luther by money. He is a brute, who will look neither at bribes nor honours; otherwise he might long ago have had many thousands paid to him at the banker's, by the pope's orders."

A short time after the preceding conferences with Aleander, the elector sent a pressing message to the celebrated Erasmus (who happened to be then at Cologne), in which he solicited an interview with him at his own apartments. Erasmus complied with the summons, and was accordingly introduced to his highness. It was in the month of December: Spalatinus also was present; and as the three were standing before the fire, a conversation took place, in the course of which the elector earnestly entreated Erasmus to give him his unfeigned opinion of Luther. Erasmus pressed his lips together, and endeavoured to evade the question; but the prince looked him full in the face, and gravely said, "I would rather the earth should open and swallow me up, than that I should be found favouring any false doctrines. But if Luther has the truth on his side, whatever danger I may run he shall not reckon me among his adversaries. Neither do I think myself qualified to decide in so important a matter; and for that reason I wish to know the real judgment of wise and learned men concerning the whole controversy." It was on this occasion that Erasmus said ironically, as before related, "Luther has committed two great faults; he has touched the pope on the crown, and the monks on the belly." The elector smiled; and was so much impressed with the sarcastic observation that he mentioned it a little before his death. Erasmus then subjoined with great seriousness, that Luther was just in his animadversions on the ecclesiastical abuses; that a reformation of the church was become absolutely necessary; that the reformer's doctrine was true in the main, but that there was a want of mildness in his manner.

When Erasmus had withdrawn from the elector, he sat

down with Spalatinus, and instantly wrote a few concise AXIOMS respecting Luther and his cause. The substance of some of them is as follows:—1. Persons of the best morals, and of the purest faith, are the least offended with Luther.—2. The barbarity of this bull against him offends all good men, as it is indeed unworthy of a mild vicar of Christ.—3. Only two of the universities, out of so many, have condemned him; and these have not convicted him, nor do they themselves agree as to their reasons.—4. The man aims at neither rank nor profit, and therefore he is the less to be suspected.—5. What has hitherto been written against Luther is disapproved even by those divines who dissent from the reformer's tenets. The paper containing these axioms was put into the hands of Spalatinus by Erasmus himself; but the cautious author of them soon after wrote a most pressing note to Spalatinus, entreating him to return it, and alleging as a reason a fear "lest Aleander should make a bad use of its contents."

There is, however, no doubt that Erasmus heartily disapproved the severe and despotic proceedings of the Roman court in the condemnation of Luther. The popish historians inform us, that he held the pope's bull to be a forgery, and would not be convinced of the contrary till Aleander had permitted him to examine it. That after this he went about by night to the princes and their friends, for the purpose of alienating their affections from the pope and from Aleander, telling them the bull had been extorted, contrary to the pontiff's real inclinations, by the artifices of malevolent persons; and that in a conversation with Aleander he had been very pressing that the resolution to burn Luther's books might be dropped, or at least retarded. The legates of the pope, in their turn, are said to have plied Erasmus closely with the offer of a rich bishopric, if he would undertake to write against Luther; but he answered them, "Luther is too great a man for me to encounter. I do not always understand him; yet, to speak plainly, he is so extraordinary a man, that I learn more from a single page of his books than from all the writings of Thomas Aquinas."

Another anecdote or two may be here recorded. The academicians of Louvain complained to Margaret, the emperor's sister, governess of the Netherlands, that Luther by

his writings was subverting Christianity. "Who is this Luther?" said she. They replied, "He is an illiterate monk."—"Is he so?" she answered; "then do you, who are very learned and numerous, write against this illiterate monk, and surely the world will pay more regard to many scholars than to one ignoramus."

Again: at the emperor's table, mention being made of Luther, Ravenstein said, "Here is one Christian risen among us at last, after four hundred years, and the pope wishes to kill him. Our teachers at Louvain, by dint of bribes, obtained the burning of Luther's books; the pile was kindled, and great was the concourse of the students and others around it. But what books, think ye, did they bring? Not those of Martin, but a great deal of monkish trash was committed to the flames."

The first defensive step which our reformer took at this important crisis was, to appeal from the sentence of the Roman pontiff, to the superior authority of a general council. The contents of this appeal are much the same as those of the former at Wittemberg, in 1518. There is however, this difference, that he now absolutely ceases to preserve any measures with the pope. He appeals from him,—1. As a rash, iniquitous, tyrannical judge.—2. As a hardened heretic and apostate.—3. As an enemy, Antichrist, and opposer of the Sacred Scriptures.—4. As a proud and blasphemous despiser of the sacred church of God, and of all legal councils.

Soon after he published, in answer to the bull, two small tracts, in which he exposes with great spirit the injustice, arrogance, and despotism of the Roman court. The first is entitled, "Martin Luther against the execrable Bull of Antichrist." In this he affects to entertain some suspicion that the bull itself is a wicked forgery of Eckius and his party. "The author of this damnatory bull," continued he, "does not understand Luther. Luther has been long used to controversies, and is not to be frightened by vain threatenings. He knows the difference between an unsatisfactory, unmeaning paper, and the powerful written Word of God." Luther then calls on all Christian kings and princes, and particularly on the Emperor Charles V., putting them in mind of their engagements at their baptism. He addresses

bishops, learned doctors, and all who confess the name of Christ, and entreats them to come forward and defend the distressed church of God from the machinations of the papists. Lastly, with the greatest seriousness, he admonishes the pope himself and his cardinals, not to persevere in their madness; no longer to act the undoubted part of the Antichrist of the Scriptures.

Our reformer calls his second tract, "A Defence of the Articles of Martin Luther, which are condemned by the Bull of Leo X." It is much longer than the former; for in this the author defends, in their order, all the forty-one articles of his writings which had been censured by the bull. Perhaps the most edifying part of this performance is his reasoning in support of the authority of Scripture. "The sacred writings," says he, "are not to be understood but through that Spirit under whose inspiration they were written; which Spirit is never felt to be more powerful and energetic than when he attends the serious perusal of the writings which he himself has dictated. Setting aside an implicit dependence on all human writings, let us strenuously adhere to the Scriptures alone. The primitive church acted thus: she must have acted so, for she had seen no writings of the Fathers. The Scripture is its own interpreter, trying, judging, and illustrating all things. If it be not so, why do Augustine and other holy Fathers appeal to the Scriptures as the first principles of truth, and confirm their own assertions by its authority? Why do we perversely interpret the Scriptures, not by themselves, but by human glosses, contrary to the example of all Fathers?" Sentiments like these had scarcely, for many ages, been whispered in the Christian world; but the time was now approaching when the majesty of the Divine Word began to be revered as decisive in all cases of doubt. It was reserved to an excommunicated monk to explain to mankind the right use of Scripture, and to impress on their minds its immense importance.

But the asperity of Luther's style of writing, it has been before acknowledged, threw a shade over his virtues. As this is the least defensible part of his character, let us hear him for once apologize for himself. "I own," he said to Spalatinus, "that I am more vehement than I ought to be: I have to do with men who blaspheme evangelical truth; with wolves; with those who condemn me unheard, without

admonishing, without instructing me; and who utter the most atrocious slanders against myself and the Word of God: even the most senseless spirit might be moved to resistance by their unreasonable conduct; much more I, who am choleric by nature, and possessed of very irritable feelings, and of a temper easily apt to exceed the bounds of moderation. I cannot however but be surprised, whence this novel taste arose, to call every thing spoken against an adversary abusive language." He then appeals to scriptural examples—our Lord's treatment of the Pharisees, St. Paul's address to Simon Magus, and the language of the same apostle concerning enemies of the gospel. In another letter to the same friend, he speaks thus: "I see clearly that Erasmus is very far from a right knowledge of the nature of saving grace. In all his writings his grand object is to avoid the cross, give no offence, and live at peace. Hence he thinks it proper on all subjects to display a sort of civility, good-nature, and good breeding; but Behemoth* will pay no regard to such treatment, nor ever be mended by it. The pontiffs consider these very gentle and civil admonitions as a species of servile cringing; they are content to be feared; and they persevere in their wicked courses, as though they had an absolute right to remain incorrigible."

To me Luther appears by no means as yet sufficiently sensible of his fault. We shall have a future opportunity of observing him more humbled under it. But the excellence of Divine Wisdom appears the greater and the more admirable in executing, by an irascible instrument, who in many instances was almost a stranger to the maxims of human prudence, such marvellous things as have rarely been effected by tempers the most calm and sedate, or by contrivances the most artful and well digested. In justice, however, to the Saxon reformer, it ought to be added, that the passionate heats and commotions of his mind appear to have been always of a transient nature, to have evaporated in words, never to have left any stains on his general conduct or measures; and, if we except the mere use of hard terms and expressions, to have seldom either injured his argumentation, or led him, even in his most trying scenes, to transgress in his conduct the rules of charity, moderation,

* Job xl. 15. He means popery.

and decorum. Even Maimbourg says, "It cannot be denied that, notwithstanding this heat and impetuosity which were natural to him, he always considered well what he wrote, and always in his writings displayed the man of genius and erudition." The church of God, we may conclude, would lose but little by this unhappy defect in Luther's temper, as it neither affected the acuteness of his talents, nor betrayed him into unchristian principles. Notwithstanding, as a private Christian he must have suffered much loss in his own soul by the indulgence of anger. His comforts in the divine life could not fail to meet with considerable interruption from so lamentable a want of self-government. In regard to his adversaries, the supporters of the existing ecclesiastical domination, they had attained a height of wickedness in theory, and effrontery in practice, which could scarcely be described in too strong terms by the most keen and severe satirist.

But we now proceed to contemplate the reformer after he had by his publications opened men's eyes to the impiety and injustice of the sentence of the Roman court, proceeding to perform one of the boldest actions recorded in history. He was convinced that his appeal to a general council would be disregarded by the pope and his cardinals; and he foresaw that, if he did not soon recant, the thunder of actual excommunication would be levelled against him. He determined therefore to separate himself from the communion of the church of Rome; and as Leo, in the execution of the bull, had appointed Luther's books to be burned, he, by way of retaliation, erected an immense pile of wood without the walls of Wittemberg, and there, in the presence of the professors and students of the university, and of a vast multitude of spectators, committed to the flames the papal bull against him, together with the volumes of the decretals and canon law which relate to the pontifical jurisdiction.

Thus publicly to defy the court of Rome, and burn the sentence of Leo X., as it was the most daring, so was it the wisest resolution which could possibly have been adopted, even if Luther had regarded only his own individual safety. At once it encouraged his friends and astonished his enemies. The die was now cast, and his life was to be saved by putting it out of the power of Antichrist to do him harm.

Every step which the reformer took relative to this important and interesting transaction accords with these ideas. That the bold thought had been conceived in his mind for some time past, appears clearly from his letter to Spalatinus on the 10th of July preceding.* Let the curious reader attend also to the dates of some other things which are already before him, and he will be enabled to form a judgment of Luther's vigour and activity in this critical business. In June and August he published his tracts on Reformation and the Babylonish Captivity; in October he received intelligence of Eckius having brought the bull (issued in June) into Germany: on the 17th of November he appealed in form to a general council: December 1, he in two distinct pieces attacked the author of the bull as Antichrist: and on the 10th of the same month he openly burned the pope's sentence and the pontifical law.

Other measures soon followed which must have been, if possible, still more affronting to the majesty of the pope. Luther immediately selected thirty articles from the code of papal laws, as a specimen of the iniquitous contents of the books which he had just burned. Upon these he wrote concise and pointed remarks, and then printed the whole, and circulated the little tract among the people, calling upon them in the most animated strains to exercise their own judgments in matters of such vast importance. "Let no man's good sense," said he, "be so far seduced as to reverence the volumes which I have burned on account of their great antiquity or their high titles. Let every one hear and see what the pope teaches in his own books, and what abominable poisonous doctrines are to be found among the SACRED, SPIRITUAL LAWS; and then let him freely judge whether I have done right or not in burning such writings." The last two of the articles selected by Luther were as follows: "Art. 29. The pope has the power to interpret Scripture and to teach as he pleases: and no person is allowed to interpret in a different way. Art. 30. The pope does not derive from the Scripture, but the Scripture derives from the pope, authority, power, and dignity." Luther then affirms that, comparing together the different parts of the canon law, its language amounts to no less than

* Supra, p. 95.

this: "That the pope is God on earth; above all that is earthly or heavenly, temporal or spiritual: that all things belong to the pope; and that no one must venture to say, 'What doest thou?' Nothing," he adds, "can be easier to me than to produce many more passages of the same stamp. Were I to proceed with the sad tale I have to tell, it would appear that all which hitherto I have advanced against the popedom was but jest and diversion. I undertook this cause at first in the name of God; and in the confident hope that the favourable moment was arrived when of itself, and without further help from me, it would proceed as the cause of God to certain victory."

Thus to expose to every eye those secrets of the canonical volumes which sanctioned the proceedings of the Roman court was to shake the whole papal edifice to its foundations; nor was it possible that so corrupt and despotic a hierarchy could long survive the free publication of its principles to the people. Daily men were accustomed to submit without remedy, and often without murmuring, to the most shameful abuses of ecclesiastical authority; but when they were shown that their sufferings were the result of an iniquitous SYSTEM,—when they read the extravagant propositions which proclaimed the absolute power of the pope, and their own ignominious bondage,—their patience startled, and began to mutiny against a jurisdiction which their understandings, as well as Luther's observations and comments, convinced them was founded altogether in injustice and impiety. Hence it was that many, even of the Roman Catholics in Germany, who were zealous for the liberty and independence of their country, were disposed to countenance the reformer in his resistance to the pope's tyrannical bull; and hence also, though Aleander procured a second bull against him, couched in the most peremptory and definitive terms, it proved almost entirely inefficient. Seckendorf informs us, that in Saxony not the smallest vestige of it is to be found.

This second bull was issued January the 3d, 1521, a little more than three weeks after the burning of the pontifical books. In it the pope most arrogantly and impiously styles himself, "The divinely appointed dispenser of spiritual and temporal punishments." He then repeats the former bull, and tells us that some persons, upon the

publication of it, had repented of their sins and obtained absolution. But on Luther and his followers, whatever might be their rank or dignity, he pronounces his eternal anathemas.

Mankind, however, could not but take notice how low the pontifical majesty had fallen. The POPE had publicly burned the doctrinal articles of a MONK; the MONK in return had burned as publicly the bull and decretals of the POPE; and they appeared to be on a footing of equality. Aleander also had obtained leave to burn the reformer's books in several cities of Belgium; and the friends of Lutheranism retaliated on the pope in Saxony, and even at Leipzig, notwithstanding the devotion of the Duke George to the papacy.

A brief attention to the political state of Europe seems necessary on this occasion, to illustrate that wonderful occurrence of providential events which enabled Luther thus to brave the pope with impunity. The pontifical character had been debased extremely by the vices and enormities of Alexander VI. and Julius II. Leo X. honoured not the papal chair so much by his elegant and literary taste, as he disgraced it by his prodigality and profaneness, and enfeebled its powers by his indolence. Frederic, the Elector of Saxony, had an established character in Europe for wisdom and probity, which rendered him far more respected than any pope of Rome had been for a long period. Hence the silent protection afforded by this prince to Luther proved his sufficient defence, not only against the tyranny and indignation, but even against the dexterity and management, of the Roman court. The pope, his cardinals, his doctors of divinity and of law, had met together, deliberated and passed sentence with the greatest formality; but nobody appeared to execute the pontifical mandates. We have already observed that the Emperor Charles V. had recently been obliged to the generosity of Frederic for his elevation to the imperial throne, this disinterested prince having resolutely refused that dignity when offered to him, declaring that the German empire, on account of the formidable strength and hostile designs of the Turkish sultan, required a head of far greater power to defend it than he could pretend to possess. It was this reason chiefly that seems to

have influenced the electors in giving their suffrages to Charles. For, by inheritance from his father Philip, son of the last emperor Maximilian, he had the possession of Austria and the Netherlands; and by his mother he had the kingdom of Spain. Add to this, his dominions stretched along that frontier which lay most exposed to the enemy. He was also a prince remarkable for his great personal qualities and endowments. It was natural therefore that this illustrious prince, singularly and greatly indebted as he was to the Elector of Saxony, should by no means be inclined hastily to compel him to persecute his highly esteemed professor of the university of Wittemberg. Moreover, as if all the world had conspired to favour the reformation, that rivalry which soon commenced between Francis I., of France, and Charles V., produced such an hostility between these two powerful monarchs, as effectually prevented them from uniting to crush Protestantism in the bud. Even the growing power of Mahometanism intimidated the papal sovereignties, and checked their rage for persecution. In fine, the capricious and imperious temper of Henry VIII., of England, was soon led by HIM in whose hand are the hearts of princes to favour the progress of the divine truth in Europe.

It is perhaps in the artful and extensive politics of Charles V. that we are to look for a complete explanation of that middle course which he held respecting the ecclesiastical dissensions immediately after the imperial sceptre was placed in his hands. If he had possessed no other dominions but those which belonged to him in Germany, he might probably have favoured the man who boldly asserted many privileges and immunities for which the empire had long struggled with the popes. But the dangerous schemes which his rival Francis I. was forming against him made it necessary that he should secure the friendship of Leo X. Accordingly he acceded to the first demand of Aleander, which regarded the burning of the heretic's writings; but the second demand, which would have endangered the life of Luther, he evaded, by deferring the consideration of the whole question till the next imperial diet, which he had ordered to be held at Worms on the 6th of January, 1521. The suspension of severities against Luther was by no means pleasing to the haughty pontiff, who was accustomed

to hear of nothing but a prompt obedience to his commands from all quarters: but the emperor adhered steadily to this resolution. He clearly saw that, as matters then stood, there were in the minds of many impartial persons strong prejudices in favour of Lutheranism, and still stronger suspicions, that in the cause of Luther himself, partiality, private interest, and private resentment had influenced the determinations of the Roman court. Moreover, it was a plausible, a persuasive, and a sound part of the reformer's defence, that he had constantly requested to have his cause tried before unsuspected judges in Germany, by the ecclesiastical laws and customs of the empire; and that, though he had been compelled for conscience' sake to separate himself from the Roman church, he remained notwithstanding a member of the Catholic, or universal church, whose representative was that general council to which he had actually appealed, and to whose impartial decisions he was ready to submit. On these various accounts the emperor considered the obstacles to a hasty procedure against Luther as insuperable. Thus a little time at least was gained; and so critical were the circumstances, that that little was found sufficient for the production of the most important effects.

Luther's affairs were now in a most critical situation. His life was in the most imminent danger; and he had but one patron of any considerable rank or distinction. No man, perhaps, ever surrendered himself and his cause into the hands of God with a more perfect resignation than he did: yet it behooved him to spare no lawful and proper means of defending both one and the other; and especially that most important means—the further enlightening of mankind. In his judgment, the WRITTEN WORD of God, laid open, and rightly explained to the people, was always the most lawful and the most powerful engine for the destruction of the kingdom of Satan. All his past success on the mind of the public he ascribed to the use and application of this engine. He would not therefore lose a single moment in making fresh efforts in the same way. Aleander had burned his books; but that very circumstance served to increase men's curiosity to read them; as it did their author's zeal and industry in reconsidering and republishing

the doctrines he had taught, in confirming them by new arguments, and rendering his compositions more correct and worthy of the approbation of the public.

Charles V. had been elected emperor in the summer of 1519, and his first diet was expected to be held in the course of the same year: but the meeting of that assembly was postponed by various causes for more than twelve months. Luther, during this short period, published an incredible number of sermons, paraphrases, and polemical tracts, more than we must even enumerate. His Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians is, however, in itself so excellent a performance, was read with so great avidity immediately after its publication, and was so instrumental in promoting the glorious cause of Protestantism, that it seems t. have a superior claim to the attention of the historian. As it was one of the most powerful means of reviving the light of Scripture in the sixteenth century, so it will, in all ages, be capable of doing the same, under the blessing of God, whenever a disposition shall appear among men to regard the oracles of divine truth, and whenever souls shall be distressed with a sense of indwelling sin. The author himself had ploughed deep into the human heart, and knew its native depravity; he had long laboured, to no purpose, to gain peace of conscience by legal observances and moral works; and had been relieved from the most pungent anxiety, by a spiritual discovery of the true doctrine of a sinner's justification before God "only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for his own works or deservings." He was appointed in the counsels of Providence, by no means exclusively of the other reformers, but in a manner more extraordinary and much superior, to teach mankind, after upwards of a thousand years' obscurity, this great evangelical tenet—compared with which how little appear all other objects of controversy! The author, by numberless arguments, and particularly by the marked opposition between law and faith, law and grace, proves that, in justification before God, all sorts of human works are excluded, moral as well as ceremonial. He restores to the Christian world the true FORENSIC sense of the term *Justification;* and rescues that term from the erroneous sense in which, for many ages, it had been misunderstood, as though it meant INFUSED habits of virtue:

whence it had been usual to confound justification with sanctification. He settles the true bounds and limits of the LAW and the GOSPEL, and distinguishes between *acceptance* with God and personal *holiness*. The former, he shows, is received as a free gift on Christ's account alone, by faith in the heart of an humbled sinner, and implies complete pardon and reconciliation with God; the latter, which he insists on as equally necessary for eternal happiness, he describes as conjoined, but not compounded, with the former; imperfect always in this life, but sincerely pressed after and delighted in. By this doctrine, rightly stated with all its adjuncts and dependences, a new light breaks in on the mind; and Christianity appears singularly distinct, not only from popery, but also from all other religions. Neither the superstitions of the papist, nor the sensibility of the humane, nor the splendid alms of the ostentatious, nor the most powerful efforts of unassisted nature, avail in the smallest degree to the purchase of pardon and peace. The glory of this purchase demonstrably belongs to Christ alone: and he who in real humility approves of, acquiesces in, and rests on him, is the true Christian. Thus self-righteous persons are rebuked; thus distressed consciences are relieved; and thus men are enabled to bring forth all the fruits of righteousness. An ill use, no doubt, has frequently been made of the precious doctrine here stated; and St. Paul's writings abound with admirable cautions on this subject.* The sixth chapter to the Romans is full to the point. But this very circumstance, namely, that the true Christian no-

* Perhaps the most exceptionable point in the whole work is, the dishonourable manner in which it often seems to speak of "the law" of God; joining it with sin and Satan as almost equally opposed to man's happiness. This has commended the work to certain modern Antinomians, as if it really favoured their views, when nothing can be farther from the fact. The following passage furnishes the true explanation, always intended by the author, though not so often expressed as was necessary, unless he had reduced his language, of the kind referred to, to a more scriptural model.—"In the conflicts of conscience nothing else ought to be known or thought of than Christ alone: and the law should be placed out of sight, but, *apart from these conflicts and the topic of justification*, we ought, with Paul, to speak reverently of the law, to extol it with the highest praises, and to call it holy, just, good, spiritual, divine." It was not the law itself, therefore, of which Luther ever meant to speak dishonourably, but only the abuse of it into which they fell who sought to be "justified by the works of the law," or refused all peace of conscience because they felt that they could not be so.—J. S.

tion of justification is apparently liable to a charge of Antinomianism, unquestionably demonstrates that Luther and the other reformers did not mistake that apostle's meaning; because, on the supposition that St. Paul really meant to ascribe the justification of a sinner before God to human works, in ANY SENSE of those terms, the very plausibility of the objection loses all foundation. Let him that would be wise in the things of God study this great Christian article, of the revealed method of fallen man's ACCEPTANCE WITH HIS MAKER; and let him do it with prayer for divine illumination. Let not any man suppose, as ignorance is ever apt to do, that evangelical truth is so plain and obvious that every one may attain it without attention, industry, or effort. Let him rather be told, that the way of life is deeply mysterious, and has great difficulties belonging to it; though it is, nevertheless, of infallible attainment to every humble, seeking, persevering soul.

How is it, it may be asked, that the most learned, and the most profound, as well as the most elegant of our ecclesiastical historians, either entirely omit, or but slightly mention, the extraordinary labour which the Saxon theologian bestowed on the Epistle to the Galatians? Must not the answer be, that they do not behold the corruptions of the Romish church, and the necessity of a reformation in doctrine, with the same eyes that Luther did? They are abundant in praising him for his exertions against papal tyranny and superstition, but scarcely a sentence escapes them in commendation of his peculiar Christian tenets. Hence many have been taught to admire the reformation, while they remain ignorant of its fundamental principles. In explicitly revealing this secret, there is no little danger lest the religious faith of our first reformers should by many be pronounced irrational and enthusiastic; or, if a greater degree of candour and tenderness be observed for the memory of those great men, this it is to be feared, will chiefly arise, not from the consideration of their inestimable spiritual services, in teaching the way of eternal salvation, but rather from a sense of their having been eminent benefactors to society, in delivering it from the ignominious yoke of ecclesiastical domination. On this last account, it is true that we, their posterity, are under immense obligations to them; nevertheless this is but a very imperfect and partial view

of their merits. It was the restoration of true Christian doctrine that broke the chains of papal bondage, as well as brought peace, and liberty, and holiness to the anxious spirits of awakened sinners.

CHAPTER VII.

Diet of Worms.

THE eyes of all Europe were now fixed on the DIET OF WORMS. That general and astonishing revolution of sentiment which was taking place in the minds of the people had proceeded, in regard to their religious views, with such incredible rapidity, that it behooved the emperor and the princes to take public cognizance of transactions which could now no longer be buried in obscurity. Accordingly Charles V., in his circular letters to the electors and other members of the diet, informed them that he had summoned the assembly of the empire for the purpose of concerting with them the most proper measures for checking the progress of those new and dangerous opinions which threatened to disturb the peace of Germany, and to overturn the religion of their ancestors.

After the diet had met, a considerable time was spent in formalities, and in making some general regulations respecting the internal police of the empire. They then proceeded to take into consideration the religious questions and controversies. The papal legates pressed hard for an immediate edict against the man who had so long disturbed the peace of the church, and who for more than six months had been under actual sentence of excommunication as an incorrigible heretic. It would be endless to recite the various artifices and manœuvres of the leading actors in the scenes at Worms. Fruitless pains were taken in conferences between Pontanus, the elector's chancellor, and Glapio, a confessor of Charles V., to compose the differences. These conferences were of a private nature, and were carried on with the utmost secrecy. But the members of the diet openly with-

stood the attempts of the pope's advocates to procure Luther's condemnation without deliberation or inquiry. Such a proceeding they considered as inconsistent with justice, and unauthorized by precedent. Moreover the emperor himself admonished the principal nuncio, Aleander, that it behooved him to explain to the diet some just and weighty causes of Luther's excommunication, unconnected with the particular interests of the court of Rome and of the pope. At present, he said, an opinion very much prevailed in Germany, that, because Dr. Luther had defended the rights and privileges of his countrymen, and had declaimed against those odious and arbitrary impositions of which the princes themselves had complained more than once, he was on that very account disliked and censured at Rome, and that, in fact, this was the real foundation of all the harsh and peremptory proceedings against him. So important a point must be cleared up before any further steps could be taken.

Aleander undertook this business, and acquitted himself with considerable ability and effect. He produced Luther's writings in the assembly; and, by quotations from them, endeavoured to prove that his principles were equally destructive to both church and state. He would leave no authority to interpret Scripture in doubtful cases; and thus there would soon be as many religions as there were men of fancy and imagination. Still worse than this, the Saxon heretic, he contended, subverted the foundations of morality, by denying the very existence of HUMAN LIBERTY, and by maintaining that good and evil depended on a fatal and inevitable necessity. He further accused Luther of overturning the efficacy of the sacraments, and of inculcating a notion of Christian liberty, which gave the reins to vice and wickedness. In spite, he complained, of the pontiff's utmost endeavours, for four years past, to free the world from this great evil, it was daily spreading itself more and more, and appeared to be desperate and incurable. An imperial edict for its suppression was now, he said, the only remedy that remained. Nor was there any reason to apprehend lest such a measure should be attended with troublesome consequences. The Catholic party was infinitely the strongest; and it was not likely that those powers who had hitherto supported Luther's cause would incur the emperor's displeasure by continuing to protect him.

In our times, there can be no necessity to answer these several charges of the papal orator. The enlightened Protestant will not suffer his judgment to be warped by the specious terms which Aleander introduced into his harangue. The ambiguity of Scripture; the infallibility of the pope's interpretations; the intrinsic virtue of the sacraments; the natural strength and power of man; the merit of good works, and the obligation of monastic vows; these are among the avowed doctrines of the papal system; and, as they were evidently at the bottom of Aleander's ostensible creed, we need not wonder that Luther's opposition to them should have been uppermost among the complaints of this zealous nuncio, when strenuously defending the established corruptions.

The papal historians would persuade us, that the emperor and the other princes were so terrified by Aleander's representation of Luther's impieties that they instantly proceeded to deliberate on the very important subject, and resolved to condemn the growing heresy, as subversive of the fundamentals of the Christian religion. But from the accounts of these writers themselves it is not difficult to collect, that besides the eloquence and arguments of Aleander, there were other weapons which the orator condescended to use, for the purpose of influencing the decision of the diet of Worms. We are informed, by an authority which in this instance is not to be disputed, that on the representations of Aleander to Cardinal Julius de Medicis (afterward Pope Clement VII.), the powers of the legate were augmented, and he was supplied with money, by the skilful application of which he was enabled to gain over to his own purposes many members of the German diet.* After all, it does not appear that this celebrated diet came to any regular voting on the business of Luther in full assembly. The records of their proceedings, published by authority, at the dissolution of the diet, contain not a single word on the subject of religion: which silence may seem the more remarkable when we attend to the circular letter of the emperor in calling together the members of the assembly. The original materials of this important part of the history are so imperfect and inconsistent, that much care and study are

* Pallavicini.

requisite to develop the truth: but the following account may be considered as substantially correct.

The Elector of Saxony, foreseeing the important questions, of a political as well as of a religious nature, which would be agitated at the diet, took care to be at Worms some weeks before the meeting of the general assembly. There this wise and good prince, from conversations with the emperor and others, soon discovered that mischief was meditated against Luther. His enemies, in general, were contriving to have him brought before the diet, with the design, no doubt, of securing his person: and we find that the emperor had once so far acceded to their wishes as to issue express orders for his appearance. The summons for this purpose was sent to the elector; but this prince refused to concur in that mode of conducting the business, and Charles recalled his order. All this took place before the middle of January, 1521. In fact, at this moment the cautious Frederic scarcely knew what course to steer. He wished for nothing so much as an impartial hearing of the whole cause, and an equitable sentence in consequence; but he had great fears, lest, by calling Luther to Worms, he should entangle him in the dangerous snares of his adversaries. Nor did he then know what Luther himself might think of such a proposal. In this perplexity, he determined to adhere steadily to two points; 1. By no means to compel Luther to appear among his adversaries against his own will; and, 2. In every event, not to permit him to stir a step towards Worms without a complete and unequivocal safe-conduct, nor to write any letters of passport in his behalf without the express directions of the emperor. In the mean time he caused Luther to be made acquainted with the intentions of his malignant adversaries; and the question to be put to him, What he would do if he should be cited to appear at the diet?

The answer of our intrepid reformer, addressed to Spalatinus, was perfectly in character. He said, if he should be called by so high an authority as that of the emperor, he would conclude it to be the Divine will that he should go; and if violence were done to him, as probably might be the case, he would recommend his cause to God, who had saved the three children in the fiery furnace. Should it not please God to preserve him, his life was but a small thing compared with that of Christ, and with his sufferings. "Though

kings and rulers," he added, "conspired together against the Lord and his Christ, yet it is written in the same psalm, Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. It is not our business to determine whether more or less benefit will accrue to the church from my life or my death; but it is our bounden duty to beseech God that the reign of Charles may not commence with blood shed in an impious cause. I would much rather die by the Romanists alone than that he should be involved in this business. But, if I must die, not only by pontifical but also by civil injustice, God's will be done!—You have here my resolution. Expect from me any thing rather than flight or retraction. I mean not to flee; much less to retract. So may the Lord Jesus strengthen me! I can do neither without scandalizing godliness, and hurting the souls of many."

To the elector himself he writes, as being the subject of this prince, with more ceremonious respect; and probably with a suspicion also that his letter might be shown to the emperor. "I rejoice from my heart," he says, "that his imperial majesty is likely to undertake the management of this cause, which is indeed the cause of the Christian world in general, and of the whole German nation in particular. I have ordered copies of all my writings to be transmitted to your grace; and I now most humbly offer again, as I have repeatedly offered before, to do every thing which it becomes a servant of God and of Christ to do, the moment I shall be informed what my duty is from the clear evidence of the Holy Scriptures. I have therefore, with all submission, to entreat your grace to present my humble petition to his imperial majesty, that he would be pleased to grant me a safe-conduct, and sufficient security against every kind of violence, as I have great reason to be apprehensive on this account; and that he would also appoint learned and good men, unsuspected, and well skilled in the knowledge of their Bibles, to try this cause; and that, for the sake of Almighty God, I may be protected from every outrage till I have been indulged with a fair hearing, and have been proved to be an unreasonable, ungodly man, and, in short, no Christian. Provided I am but allowed a safe-conduct, I shall, in humble obedience to the emperor's summons, most cheerfully appear before the diet; and there, by the help of Almighty God, so conduct myself, that all may be convinced that I have done

nothing from an inconsiderate, rash, refractory spirit, or with a view to temporal honours and advantages; but that every line I have written, and every doctrine I have taught, has proceeded from a conscientious regard to my oaths and obligations. That the gracious Elector of Saxony, together with his imperial majesty, may deign to turn a Christian eye to the present state of religion, burdened and enslaved as it is in so many ways, is the prayer of the elector's obedient and suppliant chaplain, MARTIN LUTHER."

The extraordinary piety and firmness so manifest in these letters must have been highly pleasing to the Elector of Saxony; especially as both the public and private proceedings at Worms every day convinced him more and more of the necessity of our reformer's presence. He was disgusted to find that secret consultations, to which he was not admitted, were continually held at the emperor's apartments, for the purpose of ruining Luther. Moreover an imperial mandate was issued, by which the magistrates were commanded to collect together all the writings of the heretic. Lastly, attempts, though fruitless, were made by the emperor to persuade Frederic that it was his peculiar duty to call his own subject before the assembly by his single authority, and also to supply him with the necessary passports. The tendency of these machinations was sufficiently evident; and nothing was so likely to disconcert them all as the actual appearance of the accused, secured by an effectual safe-conduct. Also, if Aleander's malignant sophisms and gross misrepresentations had impressed or puzzled the minds of any of his hearers, nobody could so soon or so completely undeceive them as Luther himself, by his knowledge, his eloquence, and his plain-dealing. Influenced by these and similar considerations, the Elector of Saxony, in full diet, urged the propriety of proceeding no further in the affairs of Luther till he himself could be heard in his own cause. The question before them, he said, was not merely whether certain doctrines were false, and ought to be proscribed, but also whether Martin Luther was the author of them. Common justice therefore required that he should be called before the diet, that they might learn from himself whether he really avowed and propagated the sentiments which were said to be found in his books.

It was impossible on any decent grounds to resist so wise

and reasonable a proposition. In fact, the whole diet, almost without exception, though for various and even opposite reasons, concurred in this sentiment of the elector. But, while they entreated the emperor to grant Luther his safe-conduct, they also besought him to adopt some measures by which many practices of the Roman see might be effectually corrected: for, said they, they are become highly injurious and intolerable to the German nation. Aleander, however, was excessively alarmed on the prospect of Luther's appearance, and strenuously exerted every nerve to prevent it. The reasons adduced in opposition by this popish champion might seem too futile and ridiculous to merit notice, if the most celebrated Roman Catholic historians had not astonished posterity by recording them with apparent approbation and triumph. The pope, said Aleander, who is supreme judge in religious concerns, has already determined this matter; his decisions ought not to be questioned. Besides, this diet must be considered, not as a sacred, but a profane assembly, and therefore not competent to the trial of such causes: neither will Luther himself acknowledge the authority of the tribunal.

The conduct of Charles V. on this occasion appears to have been regulated chiefly by artful political maxims. By calling Luther before the diet he gratified his grand patron the Elector of Saxony; and in regard to the court of Rome, he preserved his peace with them by dexterously compromising the matter in the following way. He declared that, though it was absolutely necessary to bring the accused before the diet, lest it should be said that he had been condemned unheard, still he was only to be heard so far as to answer whether he would or would not recant the errors which he had published. Nevertheless Aleander bitterly complained that a downright heretic, already condemned by the Roman pontiff, should be treated with so much lenity and concession. "He ought," said he, "to have been heard no further: and as to pledging to him the public faith, it would have been denied to any man who was only accused of the crimes for which Luther stood already condemned. The effect also of an address from a man of such artifice and volubility of tongue, upon such an assembly as the diet, could not be calculated." The sixty days allowed by pontifical lenity for the heresiarch's repentance had elapsed long

ago; and Luther was now deemed a detestable and excommunicated heretic, to whom no kindness or respectful consideration could be shown without the highest disrespect to the pope.

It may therefore be considered as a clear proof of the great decline of the papal authority, that notwithstanding all the arts and all the menaces of Aleander, Charles ventured to grant Luther a safe-conduct to Worms, and again in return to Wittemberg. He even with his own hand wrote to him, enjoining his appearance within twenty-one days, and assuring him of protection; and in this address he styles him "Our honourable, beloved, devout Doctor Martin Luther, of the Augustinian order."

Still the friends of Luther remained dissatisfied with even these pledges for his safety; so deeply were their minds impressed with what had happened to John Huss, at Constance. It was agreed, therefore, that several of the princes of the empire should personally sign the safe-conduct, as a further security against the hostile designs of the Romanists. The sagacious Elector of Saxony had even the spirit to demand, and the perseverance to obtain, from the emperor, in writing, an express renunciation of the detestable popish tenet, that "good faith is not to be preserved with heretics." This very curious fact, which originated in the wise precaution of Frederic, seems to have been kept a most profound secret till about the year 1541, when it was revealed to Pontanus, the elector's chancellor, by the son of Conrad Peutinger, one of Charles's privy counsellors.

Though this explicit grant of a safe-conduct was so important a point gained for Luther, that probably his life depended upon it, yet the Elector of Saxony had by this time seen too much of the dispositions both of the emperor and of the members of the diet to indulge any great hope of a favourable issue of the pending contest. In a letter which he wrote to his brother and successor John at this period, he says, "Believe me, I am pressed to take part against Luther by such persons and in such a way as will astonish you when I come to explain the truth. . . . .The event is in God's hand; and if through HIS help I should be able to come to you, I shall have surprising things to tell. We have peculiar need of the divine, not human assistance. I would have

you to know, that not only Annas and Caiaphas, but also Pilate and Herod are the adversaries of Luther."

Luther, before he left Wittemberg, wrote to Spalatinus, "I shall not scruple to answer the emperor, that if I am called merely for the sake of recanting I shall not come; since precisely the same thing may be done without this journey to and fro.' Certainly, if recantation be all that is wanted, I may recant here. Now if in consequence of this answer his majesty should denounce me as an enemy of the empire, and should cite me to appear for the purpose of taking away my life, I shall obey the summons. For, if Christ Jesus do but favour me, I am determined never to flee, or desert the word of God by leaving the field of battle."

At length Luther set forward on his journey. He was accompanied by several friends, among whom is mentioned Jodocus, or Justus Jonas, a name celebrated in the annals of German reformation, who was at that time principal of the collegiate church of Wittemberg. Some others joined them on the road. Luther was expressly forbidden to preach at any of the towns through which he had to pass; but he declared that he had never promised to obey that injunction, and that the Word of God ought not to be fettered. Accordingly he preached at Erfurt as he went, and at Eisenach as he returned, and in various other towns. The hilarity and musical entertainments in which he indulged himself as he travelled are invidiously spoken of by writers devoted to the popedom. In fact, music with him was a favourite and useful recreation: and in regard to his diversions, it will be allowed that so hard a student required a due proportion of these; and no proof can be adduced of his ever exceeding the bounds of moderation, temperance, and decorum.

In the course of this journey Luther was considerably indisposed. In a letter to Spalatinus, who was then at Worms, he says, "All the way from Eisenach to Frankfort I have experienced such languor as I never felt before. Besides, I hear the emperor has published a mandate to frighten me.* But Christ nevertheless lives; and I will enter Worms though all the gates of hell and all the powers of

* An order for collecting together all Luther's books.

darkness oppose. I mean to terrify and to despise the prince of darkness." The hearts of Luther's best friends, however, began to fail them as the danger approached. At Oppenheim, near Worms, they solicited him in the most vehement manner to venture no farther. Here also he was met by Martin Bucer, deputed, with an escort of horse, to entreat him to take refuge in a neighbouring castle. What favour, it was urged, could be expect from men who already began to break their word with him! The pope had published a definitive bull against him in January; the emperor, in compliance, had ordered all his writings to be seized; and the imperial mandate, as well as the papal bull, was everywhere put up for the public information: nor had the imperial safe-conduct proved sufficient to protect John Huss from Romish deceit and cruelty. At Oppenheim also he received letters from his friend Spalatinus, which in a similar way fervently entreated him to desist from proceeding farther in this journey.

'It was under such circumstances, and to such solicitations, that our Saxon hero, with his usual intrepidity, returned the ever-memorable answer, "That, though he should be obliged to encounter at Worms as many devils as there were tiles upon the houses of that city, this would not deter him from his fixed purpose of appearing there: that these fears of his friends could only arise from the suggestions of Satan, who apprehended the approaching ruin of his kingdom, by the confession of the truth before such a grand assembly as the diet of the empire." Luther is said to have mentioned the circumstance a little before his death, and to have made this observation: "So fearless can God render a man: I do not know whether at this day I should be so bold."

The fire and obstinacy that appeared in Luther's answer to the kind remonstrances of his friends at Oppenheim seemed to prognosticate much warmth and vehemence in his conduct before the diet. But it was not so. On the contrary, the reader may be surprised to find how much the zeal which animated our reformer was tempered, on this occasion, with a laudable moderation, and decorous respect both for his civil and ecclesiastical superiors.

Luther arrived at Worms on the 16th of April, 1521; and as he stepped from his open vehicle, he uttered these words

in the presence of a prodigious concourse of people, "God will be on my side!" It has been truly observed, that the reception he met with was such as he might have esteemed a full reward of all his labours, if vanity and the love of applause had been the principles which influenced his conduct. Spalatinus, who was on the spot, assures us that no prince ever experienced such honours. Immense crowds daily flocked to see him; and his apartments were constantly filled with visiters of the highest rank. In short, he was looked on as a prodigy of wisdom, and respected as one who was born to enlighten the understandings of mankind; and direct their sentiments: a homage more sincere, as well as more flattering, than any which pre-eminence in birth or condition can command. Luther lodged with the Teutonic knights, near the Elector of Saxony; and on the day after his arrival was conducted to the diet by the marshal of the empire.

On his appearance before that august assembly, he was directed to be silent till questions should be put to him. The official of the Archbishop of Treves, who was the emperor's speaker on the occasion, then produced a bundle of books, and informed Luther, that, by order of his imperial majesty, he was directed to propose two questions to him. The first was, whether he acknowledged those books which went by his name to be his own; and the second, whether he intended to defend or to retract what was contained in them? Upon this, before any reply could be made, Jerome Schurff, a celebrated doctor of the civil laws, who had come from Wittemberg in the character of Luther's advocate, called out with a loud voice, "You ought to recite the titles of the books." The dexterous lawyer took this very fair opportunity of bringing into notice the religious and unexceptionable subjects of many of these books: for, when the titles were recited, there appeared among them Commentaries on the Psalms, a little Tract on Good Works, a Commentary on the Lord's Prayer, and other books on topics in no way related to controversy.

When the questions were again put to him, Luther replied, "I shall answer as concisely and as much to the purpose as I possibly can. To the first question, unless the books have been mutilated or altered, they are certainly mine. To the second, because it relates to faith and the

salvation of souls, and concerns the Word of God, the most important of all objects in heaven and in earth, which deservedly requires of us all the most profound reverence, it would be equally rash and dangerous for me to give a sudden answer; since, without previous deliberation, I might assert less than the subject demands, or more than truth would admit; both which would expose me to condemnation from that sentence of Christ, 'Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.' For this reason I humbly beseech your imperial majesty to grant me a competent time for consideration, that I may satisfy the inquiry without injuring the Word of God, and without endangering my own salvation." After some deliberation, he was allowed to defer his answer till the next day, on the express condition, however, that he should deliver what he had to say vivâ voce, and not in writing.

The following day, on being bidden to make his answer, Luther rose, and spoke before the emperor and the princes, in the German language, to the following effect: "I stand here in obedience to the commands of his most serene imperial majesty, and the most illustrious princes, and I earnestly entreat them that they would deign to listen to this cause with clemency. It will appear, I trust, to be the cause of truth and justice; and therefore if, through ignorance, I should fail to give proper titles to each of the dignified personages who hear me, or if in any other respect I should show myself defective in courtesy, they will be pleased to accept my apology with candour. I have not been accustomed to the refinements of the court, but to the cloisters of the monastery; nor of myself have I any thing further to say, than that hitherto I have read lectures and composed books, with that simplicity of mind which ONLY regards the glory of God and the instruction of mankind. To the first question," continued Luther, "I gave a plain and direct answer, and in that I shall persist for ever. I did publish those books, and I am responsible for their contents, so far as they are really mine; but I do not answer for any alterations that may have been made in them, whether by the crafty malice of enemies or the imprudent officiousness of friends. In regard to the second question, I humbly beg your most serene majesty and their highnesses to take especial notice, that my publications are by no means all of

the same kind. Some of them treat only of piety, and of the nature of faith and morals: and these subjects are handled in so evangelical a manner, that my greatest adversaries are compelled to pronounce them innocent, profitable, and worthy to be read by Christians. The pope's bull, indeed, though it actually declares some of my books innocent, yet with a monstrous and cruel indiscrimination, condemns them all. Now, were I to retract *such* writings, I should absolutely stand alone, and condemn those truths in which friends and foes most perfectly agree.—There is another species of my publications, in which I endeavour to lay open the system of the papal government, and the specific doctrines of the papists; who, in fact, by their corrupt tenets and bad examples have made havoc of the Christian world, both in regard to body and soul. There is no denying this: witness the universal complaints now existing, how the papal laws and traditions of men most miserably entangle, vex, and tear to pieces the consciences of the faithful; and also plunder the inhabitants of this famous country in ways most shameful, tyrannical, and scarcely credible, notwithstanding that Germany by her own laws has declared, that any doctrines or decrees of the pope which are contrary to the gospel or the sentiments of the Fathers are to be deemed erroneous and in no degree obligatory. If therefore I should revoke what I have written on these subjects, I should not only confirm the wicked despotical proceedings to which I allude, but also open a door to further abuses of power, that would be still more licentious and insupportable; especially if it were said among the people, that what I had done was confirmed by the authority of his most serene majesty and a general meeting of the empire.—Lastly, the defences and replies which I have composed against such individuals as have laboured either to establish the Roman tyranny, or to undermine my explanations of the fundamental principles of religion, constitute a third class of my publications. And in these, I freely confess, I have been betrayed into an asperity of expression, which neither becomes me as a clergyman or a Christian. However, I pretend not to set myself up for a saint, neither do I plead for the strictness of my life, but for the doctrines of Christ. But it is not in my power to retract even these writings as far as the *matter*

contained in them is concerned; lest by such a step I should become the patron of the most arbitrary and impious usurpations, which in consequence would soon gather strength, and spend their fury on the people of God in more violent outrages than ever. Yet, since I am but a man, and therefore fallible in judgment, it would ill become me, in supporting my poor paltry tracts, to go further than my Lord and Master Jesus Christ did, in the defence of his own doctrines; who, when he was interrogated concerning them before Annas, and had received a blow from one of the officers, said, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?' If then our Lord, who was infallible, did nevertheless not disdain to listen to any thing that could be said against his doctrine even by a person of the lowest condition, how much more ought such a contemptible being as I, who am all imperfection, to be ready to attend to whatever arguments can be brought in the way of objection to my positions? I entreat therefore your majesty, and the members of this illustrious assembly, to produce evidence against me; and, however high, or however low, be the rank of the person who shall be able from the sacred Scriptures to convict me of error, I will instantly retract, and be the first to throw the book into the fire. Permit me to suggest for the consideration of us all, that, as Almighty God is wonderful and terrible in counsel, surely it behooves this august assembly to examine with especial care, whether the object which my enemies so ardently long to compass does not in fact amount to a condemnation of THE DIVINE WORD; and whether such a measure, adopted by the first German diet of the new emperor, might not lead to a dreadful deluge of evils. Under the protection of God, there is reason to augur well of this excellent young prince; but take care that you do not render the prospect of his government unfavourable and inauspicious. By a variety of instances from Holy Writ, and particularly by the cases of Pharaoh, of the king of Babylon, and of the kings of Israel, I could prove this important point, namely, that men have ruined themselves at the very moment when they imagined they had settled and established their kingdoms in the most prudent manner. The ruling principle should be, The FEAR OF GOD. HE it is who 'taketh the wise in their craftiness, and removeth

the mountains, and they know not, and overturneth them in his anger.' In saying these things, I mean not to insinuate that the great personages who condescend to hear me stand in need of my instructions or admonitions: no, but there was a debt which I owed to my native country, and it was my duty to discharge it. The reasons which I have now alleged will, I trust, be approved by your serene majesty and the princes; and I humbly beg that you will disappoint my enemies in their unjust attempts to render me odious and suspected. I have done!"

As soon as Luther had finished his speech, which was delivered in the German language, he was ordered to say the same things in Latin. But he was so much exhausted, and so overcome with heat and the pressure of numerous persons of quality, that he found it necessary to pause a little. Upon which a courtier of the Elector of Saxony, supposing him to be disconcerted, and afraid to proceed in the Latin language, kindly admonished him to desist from the attempt, and assured him that he had said enough. Luther, however, did not relish this advice: but, having quickly recovered himself, again went over the same ground in Latin with prodigious animation, and to the very great satisfaction of all his friends, and particularly the Elector of Saxony. It appears that this prince was so delighted with the piety, confidence, and ability of Luther on this occasion, that he took Spalatinus aside into his bed-chamber, and there expressed his approbation and astonishment in the following manner: "O, how excellently did Father Martin speak, both in German and Latin, before the emperor and the imperial orders. He was sufficiently, if not rather too animated!"

We may be sure that that part of Luther's harangue in which he asserted the ancient honour and independence of the empire, and endeavoured to rouse the princes to vindicate their just rights against the encroachments of Rome, would be peculiarly grateful to German ears. His adversaries acknowledge that he spoke for two hours, with the applause of one-half of the assembly; until John Eckius,*

* Not the Leipzig disputant.

the emperor's speaker, having lost almost all patience, before Luther had well concluded, cried out, That he had not answered to the point; that he was not called upon to give an account of his doctrines; that these had already been condemned in former councils, whose decisions were not now to be questioned; that he was required to say simply and clearly whether he would or would not retract his opinions. "My answer," said Luther instantly, "shall be direct and plain. I cannot think myself bound to believe either the pope or his councils; for it is very clear, not only that they have often erred, but that they have often contradicted themselves. Therefore, unless I am convinced by Holy Writ, or by clear reasons, my belief is so confirmed by the scriptural passages I have produced, and my conscience so determined to abide by the Word of God, that I neither can nor will retract any thing; for it is neither safe nor innocent to act against a man's conscience."—Luther then pronounced these words in the German language: Hie stehe ich; Ich kan nicht anders; Gott helff mir; Amen. "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. May God help me! Amen."

After the diet had taken Luther's speech into consideration, their speaker told him, That he had not answered with the modesty that became his character and situation: that, if he had retracted those books which contained the main part of his errors, he would have suffered no persecution for the rest: that for him, who had revived the errors condemned at Constance, to require a refutation and conviction from Scripture, was the wild proposal of a man scarcely in his senses; that on such principles nothing would be left certain in the church: that for these reasons, he was once more asked, Whether he intended to defend all he had written as orthodox, or whether he would retract any part as erroneous?

Luther persisted in his former answer; and entreated the emperor not to permit him to be compelled to do violence to his conscience by recanting what he felt himself bound to believe on the authority of the Word of God, unless he was proved to be mistaken by evident arguments from Scripture. "Councils," he repeated, "have erred frequently."—"You cannot prove that," said Eckius.—"I will pledge myself to

do it," replied Luther. But night coming on, the diet broke up.

During the whole of this interesting scene the special partisans of the pope were filled with indignation; and many of the Spanish Roman Catholics followed Luther as he returned home from the tribunal, and showed their enmity by long-continued sneers and hisses.

On the next day the emperor directed a schedule, written with his own hand, to be read to the princes in full congregation. The purport of the schedule was this: "His ancestors had always respected the Roman church, which Luther now opposed: He could not, with any propriety, depart from their example: He was bound to defend the ancient faith, and support the papal see: and, as Martin Luther could not be induced to give up any one of his errors, he was determined to proceed against him as a notorious heretic: Nevertheless, he by no means intended to violate the safe-conduct which had been granted to him."

This hasty and indiscreet measure, which was partly owing to the juvenile impetuosity and inexperience of Charles, and partly to the incessant solicitation of the papal party, produced complaints and murmurs in the assembly. The emperor, by giving his opinion first, had broken the established rules of the diet. He ought not to have given his judgment till all the other states had given theirs. Such a procedure was esteemed a prejudging of Luther's cause, and manifestly tended to abridge the electors and princes of their right of voting freely in the matter before them. Party spirit ran high at this moment. Acrimonious papers on both sides of the question were publicly affixed to the walls; and the most violent and even threatening expressions are said to have been used. Had Luther been a man of a worldly temper, or actuated by political considerations, he might easily have turned these critical circumstances to his own advantage. Could he have been persuaded only to temporize a little, and to explain away, or even soften a few of the most offensive positions in his publications, there seems abundant reason to conclude that he might have gained an easy victory over his enemies at Worms, and at the same time have given a severe blow to the papal authority—so great was the impression he had produced on the members of the diet; and so odious was the systematic oppression of

the Roman see become. But a true servant of God rarely suffers himself to be influenced by what are called the prudential maxims of men of the world. His conduct is straight and steady; and he commits the event to God. This holy, this Christian temper of mind was eminently exemplified in the behaviour of Luther, during the remaining conferences at Worms.

Charles V. no doubt soon perceived the mistake he had committed in having sent so premature a message to the diet. That assembly, notwithstanding the peremptory declaration of the emperor, continued all that day and all the next in consultation, and no official information was sent to Luther respecting a matter in which he was so deeply interested. The misunderstanding, however, was compromised in this way: Charles, at the instance of the diet, consented that the heretic should be allowed a few days' longer delay, during which time such of the princes as pleased might endeavour to persuade him to recant his errors; and if they succeeded, he promised that he himself would take care that he should be pardoned by the Roman pontiff. Accordingly, on the 24th and 25th of April, incredible pains were taken by the princes, electors, and deputies of various orders, in private and friendly conferences, to shake the resolution of this hero of the reformation. Particularly this was done by the Archbishop of Treves, a stanch Romanist, but a man of gentle manners and humane disposition. But neither threats, nor exhortations, nor promises availed to make him change his resolution, or vary from the answer he had so often given, respecting the absolute necessity he was under of abiding by the sole authority of the sacred Scriptures, and of adhering to what he had advanced, till convinced from them, or "by very clear and evident reasons," that he was wrong. "Rather than give up the Word of God," he says, "when the case is clear, I WOULD LOSE MY LIFE." In the end the archbishop called in Spalatinus, and in his presence asked Luther whether he himself could suggest any healing measures that were likely to succeed. "Nothing better," replied Luther, instantly, "than the advice of Gamaliel; 'If this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.' The emperor and the princes may inform the pope, that I feel perfectly assured this whole religious agitation and controversy, in

which I am now concerned, will of itself die away in less than two years, unless God be actually on my side."

In about three hours after this conversation Luther received a message from the emperor, which directed him to leave Worms, "because, notwithstanding the most friendly admonitions and entreaties, he persisted in his contumacy, and would not return into the bosom of the church." He was allowed twenty-one days to return home; during which time the public faith was pledged for his safety. "This is the Lord's will," said Martin, "and blessed be the name of the Lord!"—He then, through the official, returned most respectful thanks to the emperor, and the members of the assembly, for their patience in hearing him, and their liberal treatment of him in general. He said he had wished for nothing but a reform in religion on the plan of the Holy Scriptures; nor did he now request any thing for himself but to be allowed the free use of the Word of God. Let that only be granted, and he was ready to undergo every thing without exception, for the sake of his imperial majesty and the imperial orders. He left Worms on the following day, the 26th of April.

When we reflect on the very few sincere friends whom Luther could number at Worms, it may seem a remarkable part of the history of this memorable diet, that a poor, private monk, already condemned and solemnly excommunicated by the pope, should have obtained a safe-conduct for his journey; be visited in the manner above described, by the most exalted personages; be admitted into that august assembly of the emperor and princes, and allowed to speak there for hours; be heard with patience and candour in defence of his cause; and after all be dismissed in safety, in spite of numerous and most powerful enemies, who thirsted for his blood, and exerted every nerve to exhibit afresh the horrid scenes of the Council of Constance. The splendid talents and attainments of Luther, the tyrannical oppressions and profligate morals of the Romish clergy, and the state of preparation for a truly evangelical reform, into which men's minds had been brought by the agitation of various religious questions; all these circumstances, no doubt, concurred to procure for the reformer a more gentle and humane treatment than might otherwise have been expected.

Pious minds, however, will be disposed to look further. Both in these and the subsequent events they will recognise the hand of an overruling Providence, secretly controlling the designs of wicked men, and directing a variety of critical junctures in human affairs, apparently independent of each other, to co-operate wonderfully in the formation of one great crisis, that should be favourable to the establishment of pure religion in Germany.

But nothing in the transactions at Worms more astonished all reflecting persons than that this Augustinian monk should have been enabled to acquit himself with so much decorum and propriety in a scene for which, by his natural temper and the habits of his life, he seemed entirely unqualified. "A mouth and wisdom were given him, which all his adversaries were not able to resist." From this time the cause of God became more respectable in Europe. It is very observable, however, that while others were admiring the talents, the intrepidity, and the Christian graces exhibited by Luther in this contest, he himself alone was dissatisfied with the exertions he had made. He thought he had not sufficiently honoured his Redeemer. "I have great misgivings," he says, in a letter to Spalatinus, some months after, "and am greatly troubled in conscience, because, in compliance with your advice, and that of some other friends, I restrained my spirit at Worms, and did not conduct myself like an Elijah in attacking those idols. Were I ever to stand before that audience again, they should hear very different language from me." In another letter he repeats the same sentiments. "To please certain friends, and that I might not appear unreasonably obstinate, I did not speak out at the diet of Worms: I did not withstand the tyrants with that decided firmness and animation which became a confessor of the gospel: I am quite weary of hearing myself commended for the moderation which I showed on that occasion." Here we observe a humility of spirit unknown to men of the world. The true Christian, and he only, discerns such an admixture of sin, even in his best performances, and is so quick-sighted in the detection of his own internal evils, that in the very moments when the praises of his extraordinary virtues are resounded from all quarters, he himself finds little to commend: often he sees much to blame, and is heartily ashamed; and, so far from glorying in any

thing he has done, he has ever recourse to the cross of Christ, as the only sure relief to his burdened conscience.

While Luther was returning home under the protection of the emperor's safe-conduct, his adversaries at Worms were meditating a bloody edict against him; and it was expected that in a very short time all their violence, malice, and revenge would be supported by the strong arm of the secular power. The Elector of Saxony foresaw the rising storm; and, finding it impossible to protect his subject in the open manner he had hitherto done, he contrived a plan of concealing him for a season from the fury of all his enemies. Luther did not much relish the scheme; and would rather have met the difficulty and danger in an open way, and trusted the event to God; but as it originated in Frederic's kindness, he thought it only a becoming respect to his prince to acquiesce in his advice. The secret was revealed to him by Spalatinus, the evening before he left Worms. Three or four horsemen, in whom Frederic could confide, disguised themselves in masks, and contrived to meet the persecuted monk near Eisenach, on his return home. They played their part well. They rushed out of a wood, secured Luther as it were by force, and carried him into the castle of Wartburg. This business was managed with so much address and fidelity, that he was completely secured from the effects of the impending prosecution; his implacable adversaries missed their blow, and became doubly odious to the Germans, who, as they were unacquainted with the wise precaution of Frederic, imagined their favourite countryman was imprisoned, or perhaps murdered, by Roman emissaries. It has however been conjectured, and on no improbable grounds, that the whole transaction respecting Luther's concealment was planned and executed with the knowledge and even approbation of the emperor.

Though Charles V., to serve his political purposes by gaining the friendship of Leo X., seems to have made no scruple of sacrificing Luther to the vengeance of that enraged pontiff and his cardinals, he had yet the precaution not to push matters to extremities against the heretic, till he had first secured an important vote of the diet in his own favour, and against the interests of his grand rival

Francis I.* The papal ministers, who did not comprehend the secret reason for delaying the formalities of Luther's condemnation, became excessively uneasy, lest after all they should be disappointed of that complete victory which they had supposed themselves to have gained. The heretic had been suffered to depart under the protection of a safe-conduct; and the emperor, after having settled the most material civil affairs, had now dismissed the members of the diet with a gracious speech. To pacify the offended legate, Charles employed him to draw up the final sentence against Luther, usually called the EDICT OF WORMS. In the mean time, under the pretence of having certain questions of minor importance to propose, he requested the members of the diet to remain in the city three or four days longer. These dark manœuvres succeeded. The bulk of the Italian and Spanish nobles remained on the spot, while many of the German princes and electors went away; among whom were Frederic of Saxony and the Elector Palatine. The latter of these, when he heard of the publication of the severe sentence, declared with indignation that the thing was done without his knowledge.

The edict, as might be expected, was penned by Aleander with all possible rancour and malice. The first part of it states, that it is the duty of the emperor to protect religion and extinguish heresies. The second part relates the pains that had been taken to bring back the heretic to repentance. And the third proceeds to the condemnation of Martin Luther in the strongest terms. The emperor here says, that by the advice of the electors, princes, orders, and states of the empire, he had resolved to execute the sentence of the pope, who was the proper guardian of the Catholic faith. He declares, that Luther must be looked on as excommunicated, and as a notorious heretic; and he forbids all persons, under the penalty of high-treason, to receive, maintain, or protect him. He orders that, after the twenty-one days allowed him had elapsed, he should be proceeded against in whatever place he might be; or at least that he should be seized and kept prisoner till the pleasure of his imperial majesty was known. He directs the same punishments to be inflicted on all his adherents or favourers; and that all

* A vote for raising 24,000 German soldiers, in case the King of France should molest the emperor.

their goods should be confiscated, unless they can prove that they have left his party and received absolution. He forbids all persons to print, sell, buy, or read any of his books; and he enjoins the princes and magistrates to cause them to be burned.

The grand papal advocate, Pallavicini, boasts that this edict expressed the sentiments of the universal nobility and senate of Germany. He tells us that, when it was read to the electors and princes for their approbation, there was not a single dissentient. Two circumstances, however, are mentioned incidentally by this author himself, which alone would lead a careful reader to suspect the accuracy of this representation. He says, 1. That after the emperor had dissolved the diet he held the subsequent meetings NOT IN THE HALL, where the assembly had usually met, but in his own apartments: and, 2. "That the edict was voted on the 25th of May, and signed by the emperor on the morning of the 26th, but that it was dated MAY THE EIGHTH." A full diet could not conveniently, perhaps not possibly, have assembled at the emperor's apartments: but the antedating of the edict was evidently meant to induce a belief that it was the general sense of ALL the members, taken before their dissolution; and must necessarily stamp a character of fraud on the whole transaction, as soon as the real facts of the case were known. This shows how difficult it is for a prejudiced historian to be always on his guard, and how easily something will escape him which may discover a truth that he would fain have concealed.

The court of Rome and their advocates had vainly hoped, by the rigorous edict of Worms, to crush at once the infant reformation. But the effects produced by it were very inconsiderable. Several reasons are to be assigned for this failure. The good providence of Almighty God should always, as the pious Seckendorf observes, be reckoned the first and chief; but among the subordinate causes we may enumerate both the disposition and the occupations of the emperor. He could not be sincerely zealous for the execution of a sanguinary and unjust decree, which was obtained by artifice and management, and was much disliked by most of his German subjects. He was obliged also, after the close of the diet, to return into Spain, to quiet the civil com-

motions with which that kingdom was convulsed. His absence, during the critical season of the first impressions made on men's minds by the edict, had considerable influence in preventing its execution; and there can be no doubt that his various distractions on account of the wars in Italy and the Low Countries must have had the like effect. The papal historians represent it as a most unfortunate circumstance that the legal administration of the government, as soon as Charles had left Germany, devolved of right upon the Elector of Saxony and the Elector Palatine. Hence it was, they tell us, that the Lutherans triumphed in Saxony; and were allowed to go on in their own way in most other parts of Germany. Some of the princes and magistrates absolutely refused to execute the edict, and others took no notice of it. At Rome there was almost an end of the rejoicings on the supposed extinction of heresy, when the good Catholics heard that the disciples of the Saxon theologian were become, in their language, writings, and actions, more insolent and rebellious than ever. Aleander received the most explicit orders from the Cardinal Julius de Medicis to complain of these things to the emperor while he remained in Belgium, demanding—"If, almost in his own presence, and before the ink with which his imperial majesty had signed the edict was dry, the Lutherans had dared to treat so solemn a decree with contempt, what was to be expected from them when the first alarm had subsided, and the emperor was employed in his remote dominions? In fact," he said, "from this celebrated edict of Charles V., and of the whole German empire, no advantage would arise; but that an audacious sect of innovators would have to boast that they had rendered ridiculous both his imperial majesty and the Roman pontiff." Certainly the pope became ridiculous enough; but in regard to the emperor, whose conduct was equally reprehensible and more inconsistent, we must allow, I fear, that an enterprising prince, extending his dominions, and surrounded with the splendour of great transactions, will always, according to the maxims of the present world, be sufficiently protected from the imputation of ridicule.

Be it however constantly remembered, with humble gratitude, that it was the revival and the display of gospel LIGHT

AND TRUTH, which, by the blessing of God, and chiefly through the instrumentality of Luther, brought about that blessed change in Germany, and afterward in other parts of Europe, which the papal advocates to this day denominate sedition, heresy, and innovation. While the advocates of papal despotism were endeavouring at Worms to take away the life of the intrepid reformer, his books, which had been dispersed in abundance among the distant nations, and translated into various languages, were producing the most surprising and happy effects. Not only in Saxony, but in Denmark, Bohemia, Pomerania, and the towns situated on the Rhine, there were found intelligent expounders of the Word of God in its simplicity, and faithful preachers of the glad tidings of salvation.—At Strasburg Matthias Cellius defended the principles of Luther with great spirit and freedom. In his Apology, published in 1523, he had the courage to declare, that the example of all Germany was in his favour; and that, notwithstanding the edict of Worms, there was not a city, or town, or monastery, or university, or even a house or family, in which there was not some of Luther's followers. Even in many cities of Belgium, where the greatest severities were used to extirpate the new sect, the pure doctrine of the gospel maintained its ground against all the powers of darkness. This was a glorious season. The Spirit of God was at work with many hearts; and to those pious souls who, amid the thick clouds of superstition and ignorance, were sincerely intending to serve God, the light of the DIVINE WORD must have been an unspeakable consolation.

CHAPTER VIII.

Luther's Patmos—His Controversy with Latomus, the Parisian Divines, and King Henry VIII.—Death of Leo X.

THE followers of Luther were much disheartened by the sudden disappearance of their leader. Various reports were circulated concerning him, and they knew not what to believe. Not only an anxious solicitude for the safety of his

person invaded the minds of all throughout Germany who feared God, but at the same time a distressing apprehension of losing such an instructer in so early a period of his labours produced the most melancholy forebodings.

Luther himself at first found his confinement to be a great trial of his patience. His health suffered considerably from the change in his manner of living. He charges himself with indolence and undue indulgence; complains that his mind grew feeble and unable to resist temptations, and that he was languid and almost lifeless in private prayer. It is the peculiar character of a real servant of God to see his own faults in a strong light, and rarely to speak in mitigation of them. We must, however, correct the impression which Luther's account of himself is calculated to make, by adverting to the positive evidence of his adversaries; to the well-known productions of his pen during his residence in the castle of Wartburg; and to the inferences which we cannot but draw, though indirectly, from the paternal care and affectionate concern which he showed for the condition of the church.

The papists never charge our reformer with indolence. On the contrary, they allow that in his solitude, which, after the name of that island to which the apostle John was banished, he frequently calls HIS PATMOS, he laboured with indefatigable industry, published many new books, confirmed his disciples in their attachment to him, defended his old heresies, and daily invented new ones: in other words, that he was unremitting in his endeavours to expose the artifices of priestcraft; to uphold the honour of the Word of God; and to make its principles known to mankind.

A little book concerning the Abuses of Private Confessions was one of his productions in the castle. As it was composed in the German language, and would be read by many, it must have been highly offensive to the ecclesiastics in general. His design, however, in this book, he says, was "not to put an end to private confession, but to render the practice of it useful." The whole world, he affirms, was full of stories respecting the scandalous things which took place under the pretence of secret confession. Many of the monks urged the people to confess, not from a regard to piety, but for the purpose of enriching themselves. They lived in the houses of the opulent, and acquired an ascend-

ant over them by becoming acquainted with their secrets; they contrived to be with them when they were dying, and insinuated themselves into their last wills. The whole tended neither to increase the faith nor amend the lives of the people, but rather to instil into their minds a persuasion, that by a private confession of sin, and a consequent submission to penances or to other injunctions of the clergy, the greatest crimes might be expiated, though the commission of them were ever so frequent or ever so notorious.

The Augustinian friars at Wittemberg were among the first who dared openly to abolish the popish practice of PRIVATE MASSES; or celebrations of the Lord's Supper, in which the priest alone participated, for the benefit of other persons, living or dead. Luther received this news with great satisfaction, both as it demonstrated the zeal of his brethren who were embarked in the same cause, and exhibited a very pleasing and important effect of his own labours. More than a year had now elapsed since, in his tract on the Babylonish Captivity, he had exposed the unscriptural doctrine of the Romish mass. He now resumed the subject, and with great precision and copiousness went through all that his adversaries could advance in favour of their absurd and unscriptural notions on this subject.

The cautious elector, alarmed at the innovations which were thus likely, one after another, to be introduced, and feeling his own incompetency to decide upon them, referred the question to a commission of divines and canonists. The regulations which they drew up were so favourable to the new system that he declared his mandate must not be alleged for them. By these regulations all persons who were penitent, and wished to be in the favour of God, were exhorted to partake of the sacrament; the popish notion of the mass as being an expiatory sacrifice was entire rejected, and steps were also to be taken for the removal of images from the great church.*

It was not till after much doubt and consideration that Luther became fully convinced of another point in contradiction to Romish tenets and usages—the lawfulness of the marriage of all the clergy. The case of the monks created

* Milner, v. 34-40.

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the greatest difficulty to his mind, because they had voluntarily devoted themselves to a perpetual celibacy, whereas the rest of the clergy were prohibited marriage only by unlawful ecclesiastical ordinances. In his Patmos, however, he wrote on these subjects with that fixed determination which had been the result of much impartial inquiry and patient thinking. As his book on Monastic Vows* exposes the evils of such engagements, and various other abuses of popery connected with them, it necessarily gave great offence to a corrupt hierarchy, which daily found its authority diminished in proportion as the wicked devices that supported it were better understood. In arguing with his adversaries, Luther was never content to stand merely on the defensive. He constantly maintained, that the primary object of papistical solicitude and contention was not an evangelical purity either of faith or of practice, but rather the efficacy of certain external performances—as fastings, confessions, penances, and masses, contrived for the express purpose of affording false peace to burdened consciences; and keeping out of sight the atoning blood of Jesus, and the scriptural method of justification by faith alone, with the renovation of our fallen nature through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

James Latomus, a divine of Louvain, in a printed defence of the censures which the ecclesiastical faculty of that city had passed upon Luther's writings, had opposed the reformer's views of these doctrines, and charged him with maintaining seditious and heretical opinions. There presently issued from the castle of Wartburg a most spirited confutation of this defence. In this work he says, "I am now most fully convinced that the pope is that monster Antichrist foretold throughout the sacred writings."

To Latomus's objection, that his writings had a seditious tendency, and in no way made the people better, he answered, "This is precisely the language of the Jews. They pretended to fear lest Christ should raise a sedition; and certainly they became 'no better' for our Lord's expostulations. Ought Christ therefore to have held his tongue? Is this your divinity, 'They will not hear, therefore you must

* Luther himself esteemed this as one of the most unanswerable pieces he had ever written.

hold your peace?' In laying open faithfully the Word of God, there is not the smallest ground for apprehending sedition."

But Latomus's grand accusations of all were, that he described the Almighty as commanding his creatures to do impossibilities; and taught that the very best actions of the best men had the nature of sin. In all ages it is matter of patience to faithful expositors of the Word of God to find themselves continually misrepresented in this manner. Do they show from Scripture, that without divine grace we are altogether helpless and lost; and are deservedly exposed to the wrath of God, because of the voluntary malignity of an apostate nature?—they are charged with representing God as imposing laws on men which they have not power to obey; though they never mean more than to humble man under a sense of his native depravity, and to lead him to seek the remedy of the grace of Christ. Do they, in the very language of Scripture, describe the "sin that dwelleth in us" as mixing with all that we think, and say, and do?—they are instantly accused of saying that good works are sins. Instead of cavilling in this way, and setting up human imaginations and conjectures in opposition to the express testimonies of Scripture, it behooved Latomus, and all who have trod in his steps, to produce a direct confutation of the arguments adduced by Luther, and by others who have preached and written as Luther did. And such a confutation can be attempted to no purpose, except by the authority of Scripture. "Suppose for a moment," said Luther in reply, "that any man could say he had indeed fulfilled the precept of God in some one good work: then such a man might fairly address the Almighty to this effect: 'Behold, O Lord, by the help of thy grace I have done this good work. There is in it no sin, no defect; it needs not thy pardoning mercy; which therefore in this instance I do not ask. I desire that thou wouldst judge this action strictly and impartially. I feel assured that, as thou art just and faithful, thou canst not condemn it; and therefore I glory in it before thee. Our Saviour's prayer teaches me to implore the forgiveness of my trespasses, but in regard to this work mercy is not necessary for the remission of sin, but rather justice for the reward of merit.' To such indecent, unchristian conclusions are we naturally led by the

pride of the scholastic system." But if we would shudder to adopt such language of impious pride in our addresses to Almighty God, let us not before our fellow-creatures maintain doctrines which naturally lead to it.

I know not whether any man that ever lived had a greater reverence than Luther for the Holy Scriptures. It was the use of them which, through God's blessing, had illumined the mind of the reformer; and it was the want of them which, through the iniquity of papal artifice and tyranny, held the people in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. Luther therefore easily foresaw the important consequences which must flow from a fair translation of the Bible into the German language. Nothing would so effectually shake the pillars of ecclesiastical despotism; nothing was so likely to spread the knowledge of pure Christian doctrine. Accordingly he rejoiced in the design of expediting the work; while his adversaries deprecated the execution of it more than any heresy of which the greatest enemy of the church could be guilty. It was in his Patmos at Wartburg that he began to apply himself to this great undertaking. From several authentic documents it appears that during his solitude in the summer of the year 1521, he not only translated all the New Testament, but also took great pains to improve his knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages, for the purpose of rendering his intended version of the entire Scriptures more perfect. "I find," says he, "I have undertaken a work which is above my strength. I shall not touch the Old Testament till I can have the assistance of my friends at Wittemberg. If it were possible," he writes to one of them, "that I could be with you, and remain undiscovered in a snug chamber, I would come; and there, with your help, would translate the whole from the beginning, that at length there might be a version of the Bible fit for Christians to read. This would be a great work, of immense consequence to the public, and worthy of all our labours."

Such, during a captivity of more than nine months, were the labours of this active servant of God. But, besides the compositions which have been mentioned, he wrote many letters to his trusty friends and intimates, which very much lay open the unfeigned sentiments of his heart. A strong and pious confidence in God, an unbounded benevolence to

the "household of faith," and a determination to hazard every thing in the cause of religious truth, mark the spirit of Luther in every thing he says or does. He encourages the faithful, he reproves the timid, he laments the oppression of the church, he exults in the prospect of her deliverance. With inexpressible tenderness he comforts his desponding friends; while, on all occasions, he withstands his most powerful enemies with an unconquerable intrepidity.

During his residence in the castle of Wartburg he suffered his beard and hair to grow, assumed an equestrian sort of dress, and passed for a country gentleman, under the name of Yonker George. He sometimes accompanied his keepers in the exercise of hunting; and his observations on that diversion, in a letter to Spalatinus, are curious and interesting. "Give yourself no concern in regard to my suffering, in this exile. It is of no consequence to me, provided I am not burdensome to the people of this house. I suppose the prince supports me, otherwise I would not stay an hour here.—Lately I spent two days in witnessing the painful pleasure* of those famous people called hunters and fowlers. We caught two hares, and some miserable young partridges. Laudable employment indeed for men of leisure! For my part, theological subjects occupied my thoughts even while I was among the dogs and the nets. And any pleasure that I might receive from this species of relaxation was fully balanced by the sentiments of grief and pity excited in my mind by an interpretation which I could not but give to the symbolical scenes at that time under my contemplation. This, thought I, is an exact representation of Satan, who, by his snares and his dogs, namely, the corrupt theologians and ecclesiastical rulers, pursues and entangles simple, faithful souls, in the same way that the harmless hares and partridges are taken. The similitude was so striking as to affect me exceedingly."

In a letter to Melancthon, he says, "I sit here in my Patmos, reflecting all the day on the wretched condition of the church. And I bemoan the hardness of my heart, that I am not dissolved into tears on this account. May God have mercy upon us!"—In another letter to the same person, he discovers evident symptoms of impatience. "For

* "Γλυκύπικρον, voluptatem."—Seck. I. cix. 3.

the glory of the Word of God, and for the mutual confirmation of myself and others, I would much rather burn on the live coals, than live here alone, half-alive, and useless. If I perish, it is God's will; neither will the gospel suffer in any degree. I hope you will succeed me, as Elisha did Elijah."

Far superior to all the rest of Luther's adherents in talents and attainments, Melancthon was yet inferior to many of them in courage and fortitude; and on that account unequal to the character of SUPERINTENDENT, which he was now called to sustain. Luther, who loved the man, and was well aware of his infirmity, frequently, in the very kindest manner, reproved his desponding spirit, and at the same time encouraged him to be both bold and patient in the cause of the reformation. He also solicited the Elector Frederic, through the intercession of Spalatinus, to provide for the more comfortable support of this learned professor, whose character contributed so much to the reputation of the university of Wittemberg. In fact, not only Melancthon, but the rest of his brethren, the ruling academicians, were much disheartened during the summer of this year, partly on account of the absence of their grand leader, and partly because they experienced not a little embarrassment from the excessive caution of the elector and his court. They were not allowed the full privilege of publishing any of Luther's writings, nor even of disputing publicly on certain questions, which it was supposed might give offence to persons of distinction who were much attached to the established religion. Luther, though no man that ever lived was more exemplary in the practice of lawful obedience "to the powers that be," made no scruple to refuse compliance with the will of the civil magistrate, whenever that will, in his judgment, was directly contrary to the commands of God. Accordingly he exhorted his Christian friends of the university not to follow the counsels of the court, but to take the lead themselves, as he had done.—"We should not," says he, "have had one-half the success we have had, if I had taken the advice of the court." And about two or three months after this, he wrote to his last-mentioned friend in the warmest terms of expostulation and remonstrance. He tells him he was determined to publish what he had written against the Archbishop of Mentz, however

the prince and his secretary might dislike the measure, and that it was at their peril if they obstructed his design. "The peace and approbation of God," he says, "are ever to be preferred to the peace and approbation of the world. What, though some of our friends have exhibited a turbulent spirit, will the gospel, on account of their irregularity, come to nothing? Was there not even among the apostles a traitor? In ALL circumstances we ought to adhere strictly to the simple Word of God, and not merely when the word happens to thrive and be respected among men. Let those who please take against us. But why are we to be always looking on the dark side of things? why not indulge hopes of better times?"

There is nothing which so completely lays open to posterity the real opinions and motives of this great reformer as his private letters. When the common people of Erfurt, together with the youths of the university of that place, had committed some acts of riot and violence against the clergy, Luther expressed his disapprobation of such conduct: "It is very proper that the ecclesiastics, who prove themselves to be incurably profligate, should be checked and discouraged, but by no means in this manner. This manner of doing it brings a just disgrace upon our gospel, and hinders its success. Moreover, this way of showing kindness to us afflicts me exceedingly. For it is to my mind a clear proof that we are not yet worthy of being esteemed before God as faithful ministers of his Word, and that Satan makes a mock of all our labours."

It appears from his letters to Melancthon, that he was completely in doubt whether he should ever return to Wittemberg; "but," says he, "I am ready to go where God shall please to send me. The accounts which I receive of your abundant success in religion and learning during my absence rejoice my heart exceedingly, and make me endure this separation much better. The very circumstance of your going on so prosperously while I am absent, is most peculiarly delightful to me; because it may serve to convince those wicked ones, that however they may rage and foam, their desires shall perish; and Christ will finish the work which he has begun."*

* This little agrees with the insinuation of the learned translator of Mosheim, that Luther could not bear to see another crowned with the glory of executing a plan which he had laid.

Luther, while under confinement, wrote a long letter to his flock at large, which abounds with pious sentiments and affectionate expressions, and is well calculated to counteract the misstatements of those careless or irreligious historians, who would represent this eminent servant of God as a man of ambitious, factious, sectarian principles. He laments that he was not as yet reckoned worthy to undergo for Christ's sake any thing more than hatred and reproach. He owns, that if the Lord had not been on his side he must long ago have been torn to pieces by his adversaries. He is thankful for the Divine support, which had three times enabled him to appear before them with a becoming resolution—at Augsburg, at Leipzig, and at Worms.

His mind had been long impressed with a deep sense of the importance of regular and judicious instructions from the pulpit. He had experienced the advantage of them among his own people, who were now athirst for further explanations of the Word of God. To supply in some measure the failure of his usual personal services when present with them, he not only wrote down, during his captivity, a number of familiar expositions of the epistles and gospels in the German language, and sent them to be printed at Wittemberg, but also took very great pains to institute lectures or preachings in the afternoons of holy-days. He desired Melancthon to discharge this branch of clerical duty, and he most earnestly exhorted his flock to an assiduous attendance.

Evangelical publications and evangelical preachings, with constant exhortation to study diligently the Holy Scriptures, were the external means on which Luther always relied for the propagation of Christian truth, and the deliverance of the people from popish darkness and slavery. Wise and persevering in the use of these means, he had the consolation to hear more and more of their blessed effects. New preachers of the gospel daily lifted up their voice throughout the electorate of Saxony; and though some persons of the higher ranks, both among the magistrates and the clergy, were intimidated by the edict of Worms, the common people gladly attended to the pure doctrines of salvation. At Zwickau, in particular, during the course of this year, Nicholas Hausman accepted the pastoral office. His name might deserve a place in these memoirs, if on no other account, yet for the singular

eulogy which Luther pronounced on him: "What we preach, he lives." At Zwickau also, among other preachers of the gospel, was distinguished the very intimate friend of our reformer, the celebrated Frederic Myconius, who had fled from the persecuting rage of the Duke George.

Friberg was the capital of a very small district, governed by the brother of Duke George. This prince, called Henry Duke of Saxony, began to show some regard to evangelical doctrine. He expressed his detestation of the pope's bull, and commenced a correspondence with Luther; but, through fear of the edict of Worms and of his brother George, he was for the present checked in his religious researches. His duchess, Catherine of Mecklenburg, exhibited a laudable pattern of Christian fidelity in the profession of divine truth. She was in imminent danger of persecution from the bitter, hostile spirit of her husband's counsellors; but her trust was in God. In her letters, written several years afterward, she declares herself ready, through the divine assistance, to suffer patiently any thing that could happen to her for adhering to the sacred Scriptures. Thus the good seed, sown under various circumstances, was springing up and bearing fruit in almost every corner of Germany.

Amid the consolation which Luther in his retreat derived from the accounts which he was continually receiving of the courage and success of his disciples, and the progress of his doctrines, reports of a different character also reached the castle of Wartburg, and gave him no small pain. He was so much affected with the news of certain proceedings at Wittemberg, that he determined to run the hazard of making a private excursion to that place, for the purpose of conversing with his friends on the subject. The exact circumstances of this clandestine visit are but imperfectly known; and we can do no more than form conjectures respecting the proceedings which seem to have given rise to it. Among them we may probably reckon the obstinate adherence of many of the canons of Wittemberg to the reigning superstitions, and the shameful profligacy of their manners, by which they disgraced the seat of the nascent reformation; the untractable temper of Carolstadt, of which we shall shortly perceive painful evidences; and the suppression of several of Luther's letters and tracts, which had not been permitted to see the light. "In general, how-

ever," he writes from Wittemberg to a friend, "what I have had an opportunity of seeing and hearing gives me the highest satisfaction. May the Lord strengthen and support the courage of those who wish well to the cause!" In his Patmos also Luther first heard of the solemn censure which the divines of the faculty of Paris passed on his writings, April 15, 1521. Luther is charged with having repeatedly acknowledged the Parisian doctors to be wise and orthodox theologians; and with having even promised to submit his cause to their arbitration. It seems therefore extremely probable that he must have been disappointed and chagrined, when he found that that assembly of divines adhered IN THE MAIN to the old prejudices and the scholastic divinity. At this time also it was that Henry VIII. of England published his celebrated answer to Luther's treatise on the Babylonish Captivity; an occurrence that must have somewhat tried the irritable temper of the reformer. We learn from the papal archives, that this prince, before his contest with the Saxon divine, had been soliciting the pope to bestow on him some honourable title, similar to that of Catholic or Most Christian King. It is even said, that the title of MOST CHRISTIAN MAJESTY had been intended for Henry, instead of the French king; but that the design was prevented by political considerations. Henry's book was presented to Leo with the greatest formality; and the pope, in return, spoke of the royal performance as if it had been dictated by immediate inspiration; and, as a testimony of the gratitude of the church, conferred on its author the title of the Defender of the Faith—an appellation still retained by the kings of England, though with an application directly opposed to that with which it was originally conferred.

Martin Luther, however, was to be overawed neither by the reputation of the university of Paris nor by the dignity of the sovereign of England. He soon published his animadversions on both, in as vehement and severe a style as in the course of his numerous controversies he had ever used to his meanest antagonist. This treatment prejudiced Henry still more against the new doctrines; but the public admired these fresh instances of the undaunted spirit of the reformer: the controversy drew more attention; and in spite of the combination, both of the civil and the ecclesiastical

powers, the Lutheran opinions daily acquired new converts in every part of Europe.

Silence, or "a soft answer," sometimes "turneth away wrath:" "but grievous words stir up anger." These were lessons which Luther was slow to learn: and he afterward perceived the unreasonableness and the inconvenience of having unnecessarily irritated the spirit of a vainglorious and capricious monarch, which he found it impossible to appease. There was, however, this essential difference between the faults of the Protestant reformer and those of his adversaries, namely, that even against his most inveterate enemies he never proceeded further than the use of intemperate language. By principle, as we may see more distinctly hereafter, he was an enemy to persecution, and prayed for the conversion of those against whom he inveighed. On the other side, nothing but blood and torture could satisfy the rage of the papal despots—as the tragic scenes enacted in Belgium began now to evince.

Amid these occurrences, it was doubtless a grateful piece of news to Luther in his confinement, to hear that the powerful pen of Melancthon was employed in defending him against the Parisian divines. "I have seen," says he, "the decree of the Parisian sophists, and at the same time the apology of my friend Philip Melancthon. From my heart I rejoice. Christ would never have so completely blinded their eyes, if he had not determined to take care of his own cause, and put an end to the despotism of his enemies."

In the month of December of this same year, at the age of forty-six, died Leo X., a pontiff renowned for his encouragement of literature and the fine arts; but whose government of the church is chiefly memorable for the diminution which the papal authority suffered through his ignorance, imprudence, and precipitation. Thousands in contemplating his conduct had learned to despise his pretensions to the sacred character; and, as if he had been eager to confirm their prejudices, he issued bulls against heretics, while he himself was dissipating his time and health in prodigal and luxurious pleasures; in the company of debauched cardinals, and in promoting expensive and licentious spectacles at the theatre.*

* Mr. Hume's notices of this pontiff are not a little curious and amusing. On the subject of Leo's issue of indulgences, this author

CHAPTER IX.

Disorders at Wittemberg—Carolstadt—Fanatical Prophets—Luther's Return—His New Testament—Persecutions—Progress of the Reformation.

In the first week of the month of March, 1522, Luther left Wartburg on his return to Wittemberg, without the consent or even the knowledge of his patron and protector Frederic. The state of the infant Protestant church absolutely required his presence: and as he had resolved, at the hazard of his life, to resume again his character of a public actor in the concerns of religion, he wrote from Borna acquainting his prince with the bold step he had taken, and the motives which had impelled him to it.

One of the afflicting causes which influenced the conduct of Luther on this occasion was the excessive and even dangerous zeal of Carolstadt. Carolstadt, who held a professorship at Wittemberg, had exposed the papal tyranny and superstition with great spirit, and, in general, deserved well of the Protestant cause. His name, though not specifically mentioned in the damnatory bull against Luther, was well known at Rome; and, through the malicious instigation of Eckius, he had been suspended from all communion with the church. This useful colleague of the great reformer, however, discovered during the absence of his master a temerity of judgment, a violence of temper, and even a fanatical spirit, which absolutely disqualified him for the helm in the present

says, "Their sale seems no more criminal than any other cheat of the church of Rome, or of any other church. The reformers, by entirely abolishing purgatory, did really, instead of partial indulgences sold by the pope, give gratis a general indulgence of a similar nature for all crimes and offences, without exception or distinction." It is quite unnecessary to make any remarks on such a passage. It is laid before the reader for the purpose of showing him the astonishing lengths of impiety and misrepresentation to which this elegant historian can go, in mitigating the faults of the profane, or deriding the sincerity of the believer. Mr. Hume is rarely out of humour with any thing but pure Christianity.

tempestuous conjuncture. Mistaking the true meaning of our Lord's words, "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," he rashly concluded that human learning was useless, if not injurious, to a student of the Scriptures. He frequented the shops of the lowest mechanics, and consulted them about the meaning of the sacred text. He would no longer be called by the appellation of Doctor, or any other honourable title. He lived in a village, employed himself in rustic occupations, as more profitable than a life of study. Through the influence of his example and conversation, the young academics of Wittemberg left the university, and ceased to pursue their studies; and even the schools of the boys were deserted. Moreover, not content with promoting in a legal and quiet way the auspicious beginnings of reformation, which had already appeared at Wittemberg in the gradual omission and rejection of the private mass and other popish superstitions, Carolstadt headed a multitude of unthinking, impetuous youths, inflamed their minds by popular harangues, and led them on to actions the most extravagant and indefensible. They entered the great church of All Saints, broke in pieces the crucifixes and other images, and threw down the altars. Such indecent and irregular proceedings were in every view extremely hurtful to the reformation, which was happily making rapid advances in various parts of Christendom. Carolstadt ventured also to administer the sacrament publicly in both kinds to all ranks and orders of persons, under all circumstances, and without due inquiry or preparation, or regard to any of the usual ceremonies. He even avowed to Melancthon that he wished to be as great and as much thought of as Luther. Melancthon told him this was the language of pride, envy, and unchristian emulation: but Carolstadt was deaf to admonition. He openly professed to have not the least regard for the authority of any human being. He said he would stick close to the simple word of God, and that no man could be a Christian who found fault with what he did. How deceitful is the human heart, and how inconsistent a creature is fallen man! How often do even sincere persons "not know what manner of spirit they are of!" and what a warning does such a case afford us, that we may think we are "doing God service," and

most simply following the letter of his Word, when we are really going most contrary to the whole spirit of it!

It will be some relief to the reader's mind to peruse Luther's observations on these transactions. The report of them reached him in his Patmos, and he wrote to the Elector of Saxony as follows:—"There is no reason to be frightened. Rather give praise to God; and rejoice in the certain expectation that all will end well. Things of this kind always happen to those who endeavour to spread the gospel. We must not only expect Annas and Caiaphas to rage against us, but even a Judas to appear among the apostles, and Satan himself among the sons of God. Be wise, and look deeper than to the external appearance. Other agents, besides those which are merely human, are at work. Do not be afraid; but be prepared for more events of this sort. This is only the beginning of the business: Satan intends to carry matters much further yet. Believe me in what I now say: I am but a plain, simple man; however, I know something of his arts. Suffer the world to clamour against us, and to pass their harsh judgments. Be not so much concerned at the falling away of particular Christians. Even holy Peter fell; and also others of the apostles. Doubt not but they will in a short time rise again, as surely as Christ himself rose from the dead. The words of St. Paul to the Corinthians are at this moment peculiarly applicable to our circumstances, namely, 'that we should approve ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours.'"

The religious mind of Frederic was deeply affected by these sentiments of Luther; and he immediately commissioned one of his confidential magistrates to relate to him in his asylum the particulars of all the late proceedings at Wittemberg. He wished exceedingly to have Luther's advice at this crisis, but exhorted him not to think of coming to Wittemberg. The pope and the emperor, the elector said, would insist on his being delivered up to them, which would be the severest stroke that could happen to himself: yet he did not see how he could prevent it. In one point, however, he said he was determined—that if he could but find out what was the Divine will, he would cheerfully bear, suffer, and do every thing which should be agreeable to it. The diet, he observed, was to assemble at Nuremberg in a

short time; and it was expected that much would be said and done respecting Luther's business. Luther had better therefore be quiet, and remain in secret for the present: considerable changes were at hand: and if it should happen that the sacred gospel should be obstructed, it would be matter of the greatest grief and mourning to the elector.

The Elector of Saxony appears on all occasions the same man; thoughtful, temperate, and pious; approving, in the main, and even admiring Luther; but distrusting his impetuous temper; and doubtful, in some points, as to the line both of duty and of prudence respecting his own conduct. The disorders at Wittemberg would naturally increase the disposition of such a mind to extreme caution, hesitation, and suspense of judgment.

The confusions which had arisen in the Saxon church from the causes we have mentioned formed one reason for Luther's resolving to remain no longer in retirement. But besides these sources of danger there existed at this time another, which was perhaps still more threatening, and which loudly called for his presence. Several persons, who really deserved the name of fanatics, had appeared in Saxony; among whom Nicholas Stork, Mark Stubner, Martin Cellary, and Thomas Munzer have by their follies obtained a memorial in history. Stork was a baker at Zwickau, who had selected from his acquaintance of the same calling twelve whom he called apostles, and also seventy-two disciples. The other three, in a tumultuous manner, harangued the populace in the church of St. Catherine of the same town. Nicholas Hausman, the pious pastor of the place, resisted these insane prophets to the best of his power, but could not control their fury. They asserted a Divine commission, and pretended to visions and inspirations. Munzer, in particular, will be found at the head of a rebellion of the peasants in 1525. Melancthon gives an account of these persons to the Elector of Saxony. "Three of the ringleaders," he says, "have come to Wittemberg. Two of them are ignorant mechanics, the third is a man of letters. I have given them a hearing, and it is astonishing what things they tell of themselves; namely, that they are positively sent by God to teach; that they have familiar conferences with the Deity; that they can

foretel events; and, to be brief, that they are on a footing with prophets and apostles. I cannot describe how I am moved by these lofty pretensions. I see strong reasons for not despising the men; for it is clear to me there is in them something more than a mere human spirit; but whether the spirit be of God or not, none but Martin can easily judge. Therefore, for the peace and reputation of the church, he should, I think, by all means have an opportunity of examining them; and the rather as they appeal to him."

The elector, who distrusted his own judgment in such a case, called in the advice of some of his most learned counsellors: but they could come to no decision. They felt the same doubt which Melancthon had expressed; and were afraid of sinning against God by condemning his choicest servants. Upon which Frederic astonished all his ministers and counsellors then present, by hastily making the following declaration: "This is a most weighty and difficult case, which I, as a layman, do not comprehend. If I rightly understood the matter, so as to see my duty, most certainly I would not knowingly resist the will of Almighty God; no, rather than do that, though God hath given me and my brother a considerable share of power and wealth, I would take my staff and quit every thing I possess." Such were the integrity and tenderness of conscience of this prince! Many in Saxony also at that time seem to have feared God in like manner; and were brought to the light of the gospel. That light, however, for the most part, was dim as yet; and crafty hypocrites knew how to take advantage of the want of discernment in pious minds.

In this state of doubt and suspense Melancthon employed persons to procure the best information they could: he treated Stubner, who was a man of some learning, with hospitality; and meekly bore his fooleries till the arrival of Luther, whose wise and manly treatment of the enthusiasts, as we shall see, quickly exposed the emptiness of their claims to a Divine commission, and demolished all their authority and influence.

This sound divine, having been informed in his Patmos of the extraordinary pretensions of these men, had all along beheld their conduct with a jealous eye; and had answered

the inquiries of Melancthon with much discretion. "As you are my superior," said he, "both in discernment and erudition, I cannot commend your timidity in regard to these prophets. In the first place, when they bear record of themselves we ought not implicitly to believe them; but rather 'to try the spirits,' according to St. John's advice. As yet, I hear of nothing done or said by them which exceeds the imitative powers of Satan. It is my particular wish that you would examine whether they can produce any PROOF of having a Divine commission. For God never sent any prophet who was not either called by proper persons or authorized by special miracles; no, not even his own Son. Their bare assertion of a Divine afflatus is not a sufficient ground for your receiving them, since God did not choose even to speak to Samuel but with the sanction of Eli's authority. So much for their pretensions to a public character. In the next place, I would wish you to sift their private spirit; whether they have experienced any internal distresses of soul, the attacks of death and hell, and the comforts of the new birth unto righteousness. If you hear nothing from them but smooth, tranquil, and, forsooth, what they call devout, religious contemplations, regard them not; for there is wanting the characteristic of the Son of Man, of the Man of Sorrows; there is wanting the cross, the only touchstone of Christians, and the sure discerner of spirits. Would you know the place, the time, the manner of Divine conferences and communications? Hear the written Word: 'As a lion will he break all my bones.'—'I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes.'—'My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto hell.' The majesty of the Divine Being speaks not IMMEDIATELY, in a way that man should see HIM: none can see HIM and live. Do you try them therefore carefully, and listen not even to a glorified Jesus, unless you find he was first crucified."

The purest Christianity is generally in the outset of religious revivals, though it often happens that, together with the most scriptural displays of light and holiness, there appears also the wildfire of fanaticism and delusion. It was even so in the apostles' days. But how absurdly do skeptics conclude from the disgraceful conduct of such men as Stork, Stubner, and their companions, that enthusiasm

marked the whole progress of Lutheranism, when perhaps no man was ever more remote from that dangerous spirit than the Saxon theologian himself! It is indeed no small exercise of patience to faithful pastors that, while they are guarding their flocks with the utmost solicitude against gross cheats or fanatical illusions, they themselves should be uncharitably accused of supporting these things.

To all these evils must be added yet another. Many of the pious clergy of Saxony were in a very distressed state at this time. They not only laboured with little or no salary, but were often imprisoned and otherwise severely punished for marrying wives;* administering the communion in both kinds; preaching Luther's sentiments; and in general for transgressing any of the rules and customs of the Romish church. Luther repeatedly interfered in their behalf, but his petitions in their favour, though by no means coldly received, were but inefficiently complied with; as the elector daily found still stronger temptations to adhere closely to his cautious and even timid policy as respected them.

Every part of this account is in perfect harmony with the numerous letters of Luther, written near the time of his return to Wittemberg, and also with other fragments of curious and secret history relative to these interesting transactions. They are, indeed, transactions which well deserve the most diligent attention; as they throw much light on the principles and conduct both of Luther and his prince, and as they have never yet been distinctly and collectively detailed by any one writer.

On understanding fully the state of things at Wittemberg, Luther, now on his way back to that place, wrote an extraordinary letter to the elector. He told him that the accounts of what had passed had almost reduced him to despair. That every thing he had as yet suffered was com-

* Among others Bugenhagen, or Pomeranus, had married, and Luther had conveyed a request to the elector that he would give this worthy man some little present at the time of his marriage. The present came, together with a piece of venison, but not as sent from the prince, but from Spalatinus, and there was also added an injunction of secrecy. Luther, in returning thanks, said, "We will keep the thing secret, do not fear. We knew perfectly well before you gave this caution that the present would come from YOU, not from the PRINCE."

paratively mere jest and boys' play. He could not enough lament, or express his disapprobation of those tumultuous proceedings; the gospel was in imminent danger of being disgraced from this cause. That, in regard to himself, he wished the elector to understand most distinctly that all his hope and confidence depended most entirely on the justice of his cause. "Hitherto," he said, "I have offered myself for public examination and inquiry, because I had hoped that so much humility on my part might be an inducement to others to listen to the truth. But now I see plainly that this extreme moderation is, by Satanic art, turned to the disadvantage of the gospel; I mean, therefore, no longer to concede in the manner I have done." He alludes to the severe persecutions carried on by the Duke George, under the sanction of an edict from the imperial government at Nuremberg; but says, "Were the city of Leipzig itself in the same condition that Wittemberg is, I would not hesitate to go thither, though I were assured that for nine days together the heavens would pour down Duke Georges, every one of them many times more cruel than the present duke of that name. At the same time," he says, "I have prayed for him often, and will again pray for him; though I am persuaded he would kill me with a single word if it were in his power. I write these things," he proceeds, "that your highness may know that I consider myself, in returning to Wittemberg, to be under a far more powerful protection than any which the Elector of Saxony can afford me. To be plain, it is my decided judgment, that your highness will rather receive support and protection from the prayers of Luther, and the good cause in which he is embarked. It is a cause which does not call for the help of the sword. God himself will take care of it without human aid. That man will be found to defend both himself and others the most bravely who has the firmest confidence in God. If I should be taken, or put to death, you must stand excused even in the judgment of my best friends, because I have not followed your advice. Think not of opposing the emperor by force: permit him to do what he pleases with the lives and properties of your subjects. Be assured, this business is decided in the councils of heaven in a very different manner from what it is by the regency

at Nuremberg; and we shall shortly see that those who now dream that they have absolutely devoured the gospel have not as yet even begun their imaginary feast. There is another Being, abundantly more powerful than the Duke George, with whom I have to do. If your illustrious highness could but believe this, you would see the glory of God. But you remain in darkness through your unbelief. Glory and praise be to God for evermore!"

The elector, upon receiving this letter, was astonished at the intrepidity of the reformer, and no doubt concluded that, on his own part, the most consummate care and caution were never more called for than at the present juncture, for the purpose of tempering the impetuosity and fervour of the determinations of a man whom, however, it was impossible he should not both admire and love. He therefore did not choose to communicate in writing his sentiments to Luther himself, but directed a trusty agent, Jerome Schurff (Luther's advocate at Worms), to say and do every thing which he wished to have said and done in this delicate business. Accordingly Schurff visited Luther at Wittemberg, and after assuring him of the kindness and good-will of the elector, informed him, it was his highness's desire that he should compose a letter to him in a somewhat different style from the former; a letter which he might show to his friends, and to the princes, and to the other great men of the country. In this letter he was to give the reasons which had induced him to return to Wittemberg; and he might openly avow that he had taken this step without the orders of his prince: at the same time he ought to make a decent declaration, that he certainly intended to put no person whatever to inconvenience. Schurff concluded with saying that the elector's entire meaning was to prevent sedition; that he anxiously desired most particular care to be taken in that respect; and therefore, for the present, he would have Luther to abstain from preaching in the great church, where the late tumult had happened; and lastly, he requested that this whole negotiation might be kept a profound secret.

Schurff, in his answer to the elector, praises Luther to the skies: he looked on him as an apostle and an evangelist of Christ. He said, all ranks and orders, learned and unlearned, were delighted with the return of the man, who

was now daily, in the most admirable manner, teaching true doctrine, and restoring order everywhere. Lastly, he informed the elector that he found Luther completely disposed to write such a letter as had been desired.

In fact, Luther transmitted, through the medium of Schurff, a copy of the required letter, and left it to the elector to make such alterations as he should think necessary; but he added at the same time these remarkable words, "That most certainly he would not consent to do any thing which would not bear the light: that, for his part, he should not be afraid even if his former letter were made public: and that, in regard to seditious tumults and commotions, he owned he had hitherto supposed that the ecclesiastics would be the greatest sufferers; but, on a diligent review of history, he had been led to a different opinion. It had always happened," he said, "that the princes and rulers were themselves the first sacrifices to popular fury; but not before they had corrupted themselves, and ceased to support the true religion."

In the letter which Luther wrote* on the elector's suggestion (dated at Wittemberg, 14th March), he thus assigns his principal reasons for returning to Wittemberg. "During my absence, Satan has made such inroads among my flock, and raised such commotions, as it is not in my power to repress by mere writing. My presence among my people is absolutely necessary. I must live with them: I must talk to them: I must hear them speak. They must see my mode of proceeding: I must guide them, and do them all the good I can. They are my children in Christ, and my conscience will not permit me to be absent from them any longer. Though I should offend your clemency, or bring upon myself the indignation of the whole world, the pressing necessity of the church ought, in my judgment, to take place of every other consideration. Then, again, I am much distressed by a well-grounded apprehension of some great and violent sedition in Germany. We see, indeed, numbers receive the light of the gospel with lively approbation and thankfulness; yet many are to be found who abuse the precious gift to carnal purposes. And there are those who, though it is their duty by a temperate con-

* See it at length in Milner, v. 55-59.

duct to preserve peace and good order, aim at extinguishing every spark of heavenly light by cruel force and persecution; and thus do they madly inflame the bad passions of men, and, though not aware of it, in fact blow the trumpet of sedition. All this tends evidently to the destruction of the country, and without doubt is a heavy judgment of God for the punishment of the inhabitants. My sole object in writing so much was, to break to pieces the ecclesiastical system of despotism; and this, in a considerable degree, is done already. I now suspect it to be the Divine will that matters should proceed much further."

From his correspondence with Spalatinus, we collect, that Luther did not quite relish some of the alterations which the elector desired to have made in his letter. "He has discovered," says the reformer, "many marks of timidity and of the want of faith. This infirmity of his I ought to bear." One alteration may deserve to be specified, in order to show how Luther treats a question which to a mind that indulges little scruples might have occasioned serious difficulties, and a misapplication of its zeal and energies. "I am directed to call the emperor my most KIND or most MERCIFUL lord (clementissimum), when all the world knows he is to me as hostile as possible; and there is not an individual who will not laugh at this downright hypocrisy. Yet I would rather submit to the ridicule, and to the imputation of this species of hypocrisy, than thwart the infirmity of the prince in this instance. In regard to my conscience, I quiet that from the charge of insincerity thus: It is now the established custom to address the emperor in that manner; so that those words are to be considered as his proper name and title, to be used by all persons, even those to whom he has the greatest enmity."

These instructive documents have as yet scarcely found their way into our most celebrated ecclesiastical histories. They have probably been deemed to contain too many religious reflections for the taste of the times. Certainly they lead the mind to see and adore the kindness and wisdom of an overruling Providence, which, by directing its various instruments according to the counsels of its own will, brought about, during the sixteenth century, the most wonderful and unexpected events in the church. It has often been said, that nothing could have been done without the intre-

pidity of honest Luther. Let this be admitted; but let it not be added, that such cautious men as the Elector of Saxony could be of no use in the great struggle for Christian liberty. This very prince was the instrument of preserving the life of the intrepid Luther; and it seems utterly improbable that that inestimable life could have been saved during such a storm of papal fury, aided by immense papal power, unless there had been in Frederic THE WISE, besides his extreme caution, an extraordinary assemblage of qualities which added great weight and authority to his character. The operation of a Divine hand is to be acknowledged with respect to the one as well as the other of these eminent personages.

Luther, on his return to Wittemberg, resumed his favourite employment of preaching. He had to inform the judgment and calm the passions of a distracted multitude. Few persons, however, have been better qualified for the arduous task. He possessed in a very high degree the requisites which the most approved instructers in the art of eloquence have wished their pupils either to be endowed with by nature, or to acquire by diligence. There prevailed almost universally a fixed opinion of his unexampled integrity, and of his extraordinary knowledge of the Scriptures. His great skill in the German language is acknowledged by all: and if to all this we add the immense importance of the subjects he had to handle, and his affectionate manner of addressing his countrymen, we may cease to wonder that Luther's discourses from the pulpit should have produced that happy restoration of peace and good order, which, quickly after his arrival at Wittemberg, are known to have taken place both in the town and the university.

The substance of seven of these discourses is to be found among Luther's writings. In them he shows his hearers with how much charity and tender consideration the weakest brethren should be treated; that various inconveniences in the external state of the church should be dispensed with, till the minds of men are sufficiently ripened to admit of more improvement; that communion in both kinds ought not to be introduced by force, but that the people should be persuaded to it by substantial arguments; and that, in the mean time, those who pleased might still adhere to the customary mode without suffering molestation; that the exist-

ence of images in the church might be tolerated for the present, though he wished to see their total abolition; that adoration of them, however, ought to be strongly protested against by every Christian. He reprehends the promiscuous concourse to the Lord's Supper, which Carolstadt had encouraged, and insists on a godly preparation, especially a lively faith in the Redeemer, without which the sacrament itself was nugatory.—Nothing could be more seasonable, more temperate, or more wise than such addresses. "There are, I trust, among the opposite party," he says, "many brothers and sisters who belong to us, and must be drawn to us with the cords of love. Let your faith be firm as a rock; but let your charity be pliable, and accommodated to the circumstances of your neighbour." In a subsequent discourse, in prosecution of the same subject, he speaks thus: "That the private masses ought to be abolished is as clear as that God is to be worshipped; and with my voice and my pen I would strenuously maintain that they are a most horrid abomination. Yet I would not pull away by force any one person from the mass. Let us preach the gospel; and commit the event to the Divine will." "Reflect," he says again, "on my conduct in the affair of the indulgences. I had the whole body of the papists to oppose. I preached, I wrote, I pressed on men's consciences with the greatest earnestness the positive declarations of the Word of God, but I used not a particle of force or constraint. What has been the consequence? This same Word of God has, while I was asleep in my bed, given such a blow to papal despotism, as not one of the German princes, not even the emperor himself could have done. It is not I, I repeat it, it is the divine Word which has done every thing."

These extracts from Luther's sermons show the wisdom and discretion with which that reformer addressed and directed his congregation in a critical extremity, when the best friends of the Protestant cause were almost in despair. They demonstrate the enlightened state of his mind at this very early period of the reformation; and, taken in connexion with this circumstantial account of his motives for leaving Wartburg, they furnish the best answer to the invidious conjecture, that the "true reason of Luther's displeasure at the proceedings of Carolstadt was, that he could

not bear to see another crowned with the glory of executing a plan which he had laid."* The facts prove that Luther laid down no *plan* at all. His eyes opened by degrees, and he was faithful to the light afforded him. He always acted to the best of his judgment at the moment, and committed his cause to God.

The importance of Carolstadt vanished before the influence of Luther, and he soon after quitted Wittemberg. Luther makes the following judicious remarks on the errors into which he had fallen. "I found him taking prodigious pains about ceremonies and things external, and at the same time very negligent in inculcating the essential principles of Christianity; namely, faith and charity. By his injudicious method of teaching, he had induced many of the people to think themselves Christians, however deficient in these graces, provided they did but communicate in both kinds, take the consecrated elements into their own hands, refuse private confession, and break images. All along, my object has been, by instruction to emancipate the consciences of men from the bondage of human inventions of every kind; knowing that, when that was done, the papal fooleries would soon fall of themselves by common consent."

There now only remained, as an object of contention, the turbulence and fanaticism of "the prophets." The associates of Stubner pressed him to defend his pretensions openly, and to confront the reformer, who by his sermons and his authority had nearly restored peace and unanimity among the people. With much reluctance Luther consented to hold a conference, in the presence of Melancthon, with this enthusiast and Cellary, and another of the same fanatical sect. Our sagacious reformer patiently heard the prophet relate his visions; and when the harangue was finished, recollecting that nonsense was incapable of refutation, he briefly admonished him to take care what he did.

* MACLAINE.—In his tract on Sedition, Luther exhorts all men not so much as to mention his name in a sectarian view; not to call themselves Lutherans, but Christians. "Why should I," he says, "who am soon to be food for worms, desire the children of Christ to be called by the name of so poor a creature? No! no! Let us have done with factious appellations; and be called Christians, because we possess the doctrine of Christ."

You have mentioned, said he, nothing that has the least support in Scripture; the whole seems rather an ebullition of imagination, or perhaps the fraudulent suggestion of an evil spirit. Cellary, in a storm of indignation, stamped on the ground, struck the table with his hands, and expressed the most lively resentment that Luther should dare to say such things of so divine a personage. Stubner, with more calmness, told Luther he would give him a proof that he was influenced by the Divine Spirit; "for," said he, "I will reveal your own thoughts at this moment: You are inclined to believe my doctrine true, notwithstanding what has passed." The man, however, was totally mistaken in his conjecture; for Luther afterward declared that he was then meditating on the divine sentence, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan." The prophets now boasted and threatened in the most extravagant terms what surprising things they would do to establish their commission; but Luther thought proper to put an end to the conversation by dismissing them with these words, "The God whom I serve and adore will confound your vanities." That very day they left the town, and sent letters to Luther, full of execrations and abuse. The leaders being gone, their disciples dwindled in number; and for the present the delusion was quashed.

It was not, however, in the power of Luther to infuse into all his followers the moderate and cautious spirit which he himself, notwithstanding the warmth of his temper, possessed. He expresses his grief, that many monks, deserting their monasteries, flocked to Wittemberg, and married immediately from the lowest motives. He complains that wickedness still abounded among those who professed to abhor the papacy, and that they had the kingdom of God among them too much "in word," instead of "in power." There were, however, some of those that deserted the monasteries, who gave the most shining proofs of genuine godliness, and who were the most active instruments of the propagation of the gospel. Nor were their labours, or those of Luther, in vain: many souls were turned "from the power of Satan to God." It required only the exercise of common candour and equity to acknowledge the utility of the reformation in these and other important instances, and not to expect from the labours of a few upright pastors the

entire renovation of the human species. Luther's zeal was no less vehement against the abuse of Christian liberty than it was against papal bondage: he was cautious and slow in the promotion of external changes in the church, ardent and intent on the advancement of internal religion; he lamented the perverseness of hypocritical professors; he checked the ferocious spirits of the forward and the turbulent; and demonstrated his own sincerity by a perfect contempt of all secular arts to obtain applause and popularity. Concerning his personal circumstances at this time he thus expresses himself to Gerbelius of Strasburg. "I am now encompassed with no guards but those of Heaven; I live in the midst of enemies, who have a legal power of killing me every hour. This is the way in which I comfort myself; I know that Christ is Lord of all, that the Father hath put all things under his feet; among the rest the wrath of the emperor, and all evil spirits. If it please Christ that I should be slain, let me die in his name: if it do not please him, who shall slay me? Do you only, with your friends, take care to assist the cause of the gospel by your prayers."

Amid all these difficulties, however, he remitted not his usual vigour and activity. In the course of this year, 1522, he published his German version of the New Testament. He then proceeded to apply his Hebrew studies to the translation of the Old Testament; which he published gradually, finishing the whole in the year 1530. In this work he was much assisted by the labour and advice of several of his friends, particularly Justus Jonas and Melancthon. The whole performance itself was a monument of that astonishing industry which marked his character. It was admired for its elegance, and became almost the standard of the German language. All classes of persons read it, and saw with their own eyes in the oracles of God themselves the just foundations of the Lutheran doctrine. A more precious or more acceptable present could not have been conferred on men who were emerging out of darkness; and Luther's example being followed soon after by reformers in other nations, the real knowledge of Scripture, if we take into the account the effects of the art of printing, was facilitated to a degree before unexampled.

The papacy saw all this, and sighed indignant. Emser, a doctor of Leipzig, endeavoured to depreciate the credit of

Luther's version; and the popish princes, within the bounds of their respective dominions, ordered the work to be burned. Nor was their resentment appeased by the advice which Luther openly gave to their subjects, patiently to suffer without resisting their governors; but not to come forward voluntarily to deliver up their German Bibles, nor to do any act which might testify an approbation of the requisitions of their superiors on this subject.

In the mean time, George of Saxony, incensed at the growth of Lutheranism, and expostulating repeatedly with his nephew the elector on account of his conduct, began to encourage the papal bishops to exert themselves in their respective diocesses. Among these, the Bishop of Misnia commenced a visitation this year. The elector refused not his consent to this proceeding. That Frederic should permit an avowed and professional adversary of Luther to visit the churches might alarm the minds of many; but the bishop's exertions produced no mischievous effects. He preached, he warned, he expostulated, through the diocess; but the papal arguments were now stale, insipid, and ineffective. Other bishops, with the consent of the elector, made the like peregrinations with the same result; and it required all the power and rigour of the Duke George to keep his own subjects within the bounds of papal obedience: so much more happy did the subjects of Frederic, who enjoyed liberty of conscience, seem to be than themselves, who remained papists by constraint; and so much light, from the proximity of their situation, had they received concerning the nature of true religion. George also recalled from the schools and universities, wherever he supposed the contagion of the new doctrines prevailed, all the students who were under his power or influence. He was little aware how completely such proceedings defeated his own designs. The seminaries of education at Leipzig were more and more deserted; while the young scholars, impelled by curiosity, a thirst of knowledge, or a hatred of compulsion, fled to Wittemberg, now become famous for rational inquiry and Christian liberty.

But the difficulties of providing for the instruction and edification of the Lutheran churches began now to be more and more apparent. It was not possible that public worship and the administration of the sacraments could be con-

ducted decently and in order, without some plan of ecclesiastical discipline. The court would do no more than grant a tacit protection to the pastors; and the great personal authority of Luther seemed to be the only cement of union among those who loved the gospel. It was easy to foresee what feuds and divisions might arise from so uncertain and fluctuating a state of the church; and there was no opportunity of forming a general synod of pastors and elders, who might regulate the external state of religion. On the one hand, the bishops, and many of the clergy and monks, who still adhered to the old system, laboured to harass and perplex the minds of all serious inquirers after divine truth; and on the other, many of the people panted for the benefit of a church order, more emancipated from superstitions, and better adapted to the evangelical ideas which they were continually receiving, either from reading the books or hearing the sermons of Luther and his associates. In this crisis the reformer was consulted by the parochial clergy of some of the principal towns in Saxony, who were anxious to try whether improvements of a similar kind to those introduced at Wittemberg might not be made in other places. This application gave rise to a little treatise, which Luther, in the year 1523, published, and dedicated to Nicholas Hausman, the esteemed pastor of Zwickau. It displays the thoughtfulness and caution which marked his conduct in his public proceedings. He undertook to remove some of the most flagrant abuses in baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to recommend communion in both kinds; at the same time that he still tolerated, till a more favourable opportunity should occur, many inferior matters not directly sinful, though inconvenient and useless: for the zeal of Luther, like that of St. Paul, exerted all its vehemence on the essentials of salvation—real faith and real piety. On externals and ceremonial subjects he would to many Protestants appear too remiss, especially to those who have not considered so much as he did the danger of needless divisions.

He complained, however, of an evil in the great church at Wittemberg, which it was not in his power to rectify, namely, the celebration of private masses, in which the very essence of religious merchandise and religious imposture was practised. It is not easy to exculpate the Elector of Saxony on this article, as he must have well known the danger and mis-

chief of the traffic; but he appears either not to have had the fortitude to oppose the abomination, or, what is more probable, to have had some method of pacifying his conscience in tolerating it. Not long after, it pleased God to remove by death some of the more obstinate canons of Wittemberg, and Luther found an opportunity of gradually annihilating this great bulwark of popery.

Neither did it escape the sagacity of our reformer, that the alterations which were daily taking place, in consequence of the Protestant doctrines, would in many instances be attended with a dangerous redundance of ecclesiastical revenue. The monasteries and colleges would soon be deserted, and it was not probable that new inhabitants would succeed the old ones. Luther foresaw that much scandal and great abuses might arise from this circumstance, unless certain effectual precautions were taken in due time, to prevent the superfluous money from becoming a temptation to the rapacity or covetousness of worldly-minded men. He therefore published his thoughts freely on the delicate subject of the due application of ecclesiastical property; and thereby, as might be expected, gave prodigious offence to the papal party. He proposed that a sort of "common treasury" should be made of the above-mentioned ecclesiastical revenues, for the erection of schools and hospitals, the maintenance of preachers, and other pious and laudable objects.

The success of Luther's New Testament, in the mean time, was quite alarming. Women of the first distinction, Maimbourg tells us, studied it with the most industrious and persevering attention, and obstinately defended the tenets of the reformer against bishops, monks, and Catholic doctors. This made it absolutely necessary that further measures should be taken to stay its pestilential influence.* Jerome Emser, who had already published his puerile but calumnious notes on Luther's New Testament, was the champion

* The testimony of Dr. Robertson to the effect of the translation of the Scriptures is striking. Luther "finished part of the New Testament in 1522; and the publication of it proved more fatal to the church of Rome than that of all his own works. It was read with wonderful avidity and attention by persons of every rank. They were astonished at discovering how contrary the precepts of the Author of our religion are to the inventions of those priests who pretended to be his vicegerents."—Charles V., book iv.

selected for this service. The plan he adopted was to set forth, with the encouragement of George and two bishops, what was called "A correct Translation of the New Testament into German," in opposition to that of Luther.

Emser professed to "confute Luther's interpretations of the Scriptures, and opposed to them his own, in which he constantly followed that sense of any passage which the church approved." He acknowledges, however, that he was "by no means convinced of the expediency of trusting the Scriptures with the ignorant multitude. If the laity," said he, "would take my advice, I would recommend it to them rather to aim at a holy life, than to study the Scriptures. The Scriptures are committed to the learned, and to them only."—This needs no comment: it is in the true spirit of popery: which has no notion that Christian practice is to be produced only by Christian principles, imbibed from the pure Word of God. Amid the rough treatment, however, which Luther met with from Emser and his patrons, he might derive, like St. Paul, abundant consolation from reflecting that the knowledge of the Bible was spread among the people, even by those who were actuated by a spirit of "envy and strife." It turned out on examination, that Emser's Testament was little more than a transcript of Luther's, with some alterations in favour of the tenets of the Romish church! "In fact," says the reformer, "Emser has left out my preface, inserted his own, and then sold my translation almost word for word! I have determined, therefore, not to produce a syllable in print against it. The best revenge which I could wish for is what I have, that, though Luther's name is suppressed, and that of his adversary put in its place, yet Luther's book is read, and thus the design of his labours is promoted by his very enemies!"

Though the bitterness, activity, and perseverance of George of Saxony have secured to him an infamous precedence among the persecutors of those times, yet there were not wanting instances of the exercise of similar zeal and barbarity in support of the popedom. Henry Duke of Brunswick is numbered among the princes who followed his example; and also the emperor's brother, Ferdinand Archduke of Austria. This latter issued a severe edict to prevent the publication of Luther's translation of the Scrip-

tures, which had soon gone through several editions; and he forbade all the subjects of his imperial majesty to have any copies either of that or of any of Luther's books. In Flanders the persecution appears to have been extreme. Many, on account of their adherence to Lutheranism, were put to death, or deprived of their property, by the most summary and tyrannical proceedings. At Antwerp the monks were remarkably favourable to the reformation. Many of them suffered death with patience and firmness; others were punished in various ways, after having, through long imprisonment and the dread of losing their lives, been compelled to recant.

In nothing but their ZEAL did Luther imitate either the civil or the ecclesiastical persecutors of the Protestants. He was now at open war with the pope, his cardinals, and his bishops; but on his part it was entirely a war of reason and argument. From all his numerous and most acrimonious publications, not a single line has been produced where he wishes or recommends force and violence in the smallest degree to be used against the persons of his enemies. Wherever, on the other hand, his enemies had the civil power on their side, nothing but the apprehension of being condemned at the awful tribunal of the public opinion could suspend the up-lifted hand of persecution. On this apprehension was grounded the invariable maxim of the Romish policy, namely, to keep the Scriptures from the people, to darken their understandings, and to implant in their minds an implicit confidence in the dogmas of a corrupt church. It was therefore the wisdom and the duty of Martin Luther to adopt a directly opposite system of conduct; and few men have been more admirably qualified to inculcate important truths on the minds of the people. Distinct in his conceptions, eloquent in expressing them, and fearless of danger, he confounded his adversaries, instructed the ignorant, and every day brought proselytes to the simplicity of the gospel. He conversed, he preached, he wrote, with almost unexampled industry. He placed the controverted points in various lights, and overwhelmed his adversaries with the rapidity of his productions.

The consideration of the sufferings of pious persons deeply afflicted his mind; and he might easily have excited the leading characters among his countrymen to hostility

and rebellion; and still more easily the common people to sedition and mutiny: but such conduct would have been directly at variance with every part of his practice, as well as every article of his creed. In obedience to the injunctions of inspiration, he preached submission to authority, and himself constantly exemplified his doctrine; he assailed men's understandings only; and it was his uninterrupted consolation to reflect, that his cause was the cause of God and his Christ; that he had wielded no weapon in the conflict but that of the Divine Word; and that, amid all the dangers to which he was exposed, he was every moment undermining the very principles of persecution itself, and paving the way for its total extinction.

He was constantly making attacks on the essential doctrines and usages of the Romish communion. In the course of the present year, besides his translation of the Scriptures, he published several tracts in the German language; the most elaborate of which is "against the falsely called ecclesiastical order of Pope and Bishops." In this work he styles himself simply the PREACHER: having been stripped, he said, by the pope's bulls, of the titles of priest and doctor.—"Ye bishops," said he, "revile me as a heretic, but I regard you not. I foresee there will be an end of your tyranny and your murders. As long as I live, my attacks on your abominations shall grow bolder and fiercer. I will make no truce with you. And if ye slay me ye shall be still further from my peace. My most earnest wish is that ye may repent, but if ye will *not* repent there must be perpetual war between us." He then proceeds to show how much those were to be valued who were bishops indeed, and governed their flocks according to the rules prescribed by St. Paul to Timothy and Titus; and how exceedingly opposite to the apostolical standard was the general character of the bishops of his own time. "Let no man suppose," he says, "that what I now say against these ecclesiastical tyrants is applicable to a sound state of the church, or to true bishops or good pastors."

In the body of this spirited performance the author inserts what he calls THE BULL AND REFORMATION OF LUTHER, in contemptuous imitation and defiance of the papal bulls. But he adds, "Let it always be carefully observed, that when I speak of overturning or extinguishing the reign of the bishops,

I would by no means be understood as though this resolution should be brought about by the sword, or by force, or by any species of tumultuary violence and compulsion; such destructive methods are totally inapplicable to this important business, which is indeed the cause of God. The kingdom of Antichrist, according to the prophet Daniel's prediction, must be broken 'WITHOUT HAND:' that is, the Scriptures will be understood by-and-by, and every one will speak and preach against the papal tyranny from the Word of God: until THIS 'MAN OF SIN' is deserted by all his adherents, and dies of himself. This is the true Christian way of destroying him; and to promote this end we ought to exert our utmost power, encounter every danger, and undergo every loss and inconvenience."

During this vehement exercise of the voice and pen of Luther on the one hand, and the sufferings of the Protestants from the sharp sword of persecution on the other, the Word of God was preached, with much success, in several parts of Germany, particularly at Nuremberg, at Frankfort on the Maine, at Ulm, and at Halle in Suabia. At Miltenberg the gospel was taught by the learned Protestant reformer John Draco; and at Bremen and Magdeburg by two fugitive Augustinian monks, one of whom had stolen out of his prison at Antwerp, and the other had been forced to leave Halberstadt. At Zerbst, the chief city in the principality of Anhalt, Luther himself preached to a crowded audience in the Augustinian monastery, with great effect on the minds of the people. The reformation was begun likewise at Stettin and Sunda, in the anterior Pomerania. The inhabitants of the former requested two pastors to be sent to them from Wittemberg: at the latter, unhappily, the gospel was disgraced by the riotous proceedings of the tumultous populace. A Danish domestic of Luther's appears to have sown the first seeds of evangelical truth at Stolpen in the hinder Pomerania. Cnophius and Bugenhagen were schoolmasters of such great reputation at Treptow, that numerous pupils, not only from the neighbouring towns, but even from Livonia and Westphalia, came in quest of their instructions. Both these learned men, however, were so persecuted on account of their Lutheran principles, that Bugenhagen repaired to Wittemberg, and Cno-

phius, with his Livonian scholars, left Treptow, applied himself to the ministry, travelled to Riga, Revel, and Dolpat, and in all those places, particularly Riga, inveighed against the popish abuses, and preached the leading doctrines of Christianity with much animation and fidelity. The Friesianders also desired pastors from Wittemberg; and Hamburg, it appears, had openly renounced the papal jurisdiction. Caspar Hedio, Martin Bucer, and John Œcolampadius are names famous in the history of the reformation; and these servants of God were, about the same time, teaching the reformed religion in Alsace and Switzerland.

To compare with any degree of accuracy the contemporary advancement of the dawnings of reformation in different places is no easy task; but even this brief account may satisfy us that the spirit of religious inquiry was greater, and the external progress, at least, of sound doctrine more rapid in many towns and districts than even in the electorate of Saxony itself. There, as the government continued to stand almost neutral, it was frequently in the power of a bigoted magistrate or ecclesiastic lamentably to obstruct the free course of Christian doctrine. But wherever the eyes of an able and industrious pastor, or even of a lay character of weight and distinction, were happily open to the excellence of the new system, the gospel triumphed in a most surprising manner. Such, at that season, was the preparation of men's hearts for its reception.

The papal historians acknowledge with grief that Lutheranism had lamentably increased in the latter part of the year 1522, and the beginning of 1523; and that the rapid ascendency which it had gained appeared but too manifestly at the ensuing diet of Nuremburg. But without warrant from facts they invidiously ascribe this happy revolution of sentiment to the temptation, which the new doctrines held out to the German princes and magistrates, of enriching themselves from the spoils of the church. The narrative before us furnishes the best answer to all such insinuations.

CHAPTER X.

Adrian VI. Pope — Diet of Nuremberg — Hundred Grievances — Situation of the Elector of Saxony — Clement VII. Pope — Second Diet of Nuremberg — Confederation of Ratisbon — Convention of Spires — Progress of Reformation in various Countries.

ADRIAN VI., who had formerly been preceptor to Charles V., had succeeded Leo X. in the popedom. He was a man of far greater sobriety and purity of manners than had for a long time occupied the papal chair; and he appears to have been unfeignedly desirous of reforming Christendom in general, and the court of Rome in particular.

One of the first measures of the new pontiff was to send a legate, Francis Cheregato, to the imperial diet assembled at Nuremberg, with a diploma or brief addressed to the German princes. The brief was filled with the most virulent invectives against Luther; who, "notwithstanding the sentence of Leo X., which was ordered by the edict of Worms to be executed without delay, continued to teach the same errors, and by his fresh publications daily to corrupt the morals of the people: and, what was the worst part of the mischief, he was supported, not only by the vulgar, but by several persons of distinction, who had begun to shake off their obedience to the clergy, plunder them of their property, and raise civil commotions. What," the pope asked, "is Luther alone possessed of wisdom and of the Holy Spirit? Has the church been in ignorance till Luther afforded us this new light? Be assured, ye princes of Germany, this Lutheran patronage of evangelical liberty is a mere pretence. Those who have torn and burned the sacred canons, and the decrees of councils and popes, will have no respect for the laws of the empire. They have shaken off their obedience to bishops and priests; they will not spare the persons, houses, and goods of the laity." In fine, Adrian exhorted the diet to be unanimous in their endeavours to extinguish this devouring flame: and to enforce his

advice he recited the examples of Dathan and Abiram, Ananias and Sapphira, John Huss and Jerome of Prague.

It was below the dignity, even of a conscientious pontiff, to admit into a brief, in which he was dealing out his threatenings against an obstinate heretic, any admixture of candid and ingenuous concession respecting the prevailing ecclesiastical abuses. In the instructions, however, given to his nuncio, we find acknowledgments of this kind, which might even justify the most acrimonious accusations of Luther. Cheregato was charged, after informing the diet how much the pope was troubled on account of the progress of Lutheranism, to own explicitly that all this confusion was the effect of men's sins, particularly of the sins of the clergy and prelates; that for some years past many abuses, abominations, and excesses had been committed in the court of Rome, even in the holy see itself; that every thing had degenerated to a great degree; and that it was no wonder if the evil had passed from THE HEAD to the members—from the popes to the bishops and other ecclesiastics. "We have all," says the pope, "turned every one of us to his own way, and for a long time none hath done good, no not one. Let us give glory to God, and humble our souls before him; and every individual among us consider how great has been his own fall, and judge himself, that God may not judge us in his wrath. Nothing shall be wanting on my part to reform the court of Rome, whence, perhaps, all the mischief has originated; that as this court has been the source of the corruptions which have thence spread among the lower orders, so from the same a sound reformation may proceed." He concluded with observing how much he had this business at heart; but that they must not wonder if ALL these abuses could not be soon corrected. The disease was complicated and inveterate, and the cure must proceed step by step, lest by attempting to do all at once, every thing should be thrown into confusion.

The cardinals at Rome are said to have been much displeased at the candid concessions of Adrian; though Sleidan suspects that they were no more than the repetition of an artifice often employed by the popes, to raise men's expectations, delay the calling of a general council, and gain time for sounding the dispositions of princes. Luther appears to have thought the same; for he translated the pontifical mandates

into German, and added short marginal notes; one of which, on the expression "the cure must proceed step by step," is sufficiently sarcastic: "You are to understand these words to mean, that there must be an interval of SOME AGES between each step."

Even, however, if we allow more sincerity to Adrian's professions, two very substantial reasons may be given for the failure of his designs of reformation. 1. The veteran hypocrites with whom he was surrounded at Rome were too much interested in supporting the ancient corruptions, and too well skilled in the arts of obstructing any schemes of correction and amendment, to suffer the intended innovations to succeed, particularly as they were proposed by a pope declining in years, and ignorant of the ways of the world.* 2. As this pontiff applied his thoughts merely to morals, and did not suspect any unsoundness of doctrine in the established creed, his attempts were fundamentally defective, and therefore, as to the event, unpromising in the last degree. "A CORRUPT TREE cannot bring forth GOOD FRUIT."

The publication of the pope's brief, and his explanatory instructions in the diet, seemed at first to have made a strong impression on a great part of that assembly; and as his nuncio, among other things, had accused the clergy of Nuremberg, the town in which they were assembled, of preaching impious doctrines, and insisted on their being imprisoned, the bishops and other dignitaries of the sacred order stood up, and with immense clamour called out, "Luther must be taken off, and the propagators of his sentiments must be imprisoned!" It soon appeared, however, that the German princes were in no disposition either to be soothed by the flatteries or overawed by the menaces of a Roman pontiff. They told the nuncio they believed he had been ill-informed respecting the conduct of the preachers at Nuremberg, who, in truth, were held at that moment in high estimation by the people; and that therefore, if any harsh measures should be adopted against them, there

* It is on this occasion that Pallavicini, the papal historian of the Council of Trent, tells us, he would rather choose that the head of the church should be a man of "moderate sanctity, joined with extraordinary prudence, than one whose prudence was but of the middle sort, whatever might be his character for holiness."

would soon be a general outcry that a design was formed to oppress the cause of truth; and this might lead to sedition and civil commotions.

In regard to the pope's complaints concerning Luther and his sect, they avowed that they had omitted to execute the edict of Worms for the most weighty and urgent reasons; that any attempt, in the present state of the public mind, to execute by force the late damnatory sentence of the pope and emperor, would inevitably be attended with the most dangerous consequences; and that a trial ought therefore to be made of expedients less inflammatory in their nature, and better suited to the circumstances. They applauded the pope's pious intention to reform the court of Rome, which he had ingenuously owned to be the source of all the mischief: but there were moreover, they said, particular grievances and abuses, an account of which they purposed to exhibit in a distinct memorial. These required effectual redress; without which it would be in vain to expect the eradication of errors, and the re-establishment of peace and harmony among the ecclesiastical and secular orders in Germany. The most efficacious remedy, they added, for all the existing evils was, that the pope, with the consent of the emperor, should speedily appoint a free, godly, and Christian council, to be held in some convenient part of Germany, in which full liberty should be granted to every member to speak and give advice, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Lastly, they promised that they would request the Elector of Saxony to interpose his authority, and prevent the Lutheran party from printing books or preaching sermons on subjects of a seditious tendency; and that, in general, they would do their utmost to confine the preachers, for the present, to the exposition of the plain, pure gospel of Christ, and to make them wait for the determination of the future council respecting all doubtful controverted matters. The bishops also should appoint virtuous and learned men to superintend the parochial clergy, to correct their errors and irregularities with kindness and moderation, as occasion may require; but by no means in such a manner as to excite just suspicion of a design to prevent the promulgation of Christian truth. As to the priests who had married wives, or the monks who had left their convents, they conceived it sufficient if the ordinaries inflicted the canonical

punishments on the offenders. The civil laws had made no provision for such cases.

This answer of the diet was delivered in writing to the pope's legate, who ventured to express his disapprobation of it in strong terms. Neither his most holy master, he said, nor any emperor, nor any Christian prince had ever expected to hear such language from the diet. Since the solemn condemnation of Luther, that incurable heretic had not only persevered in his old errors, but had also been guilty of many new transgressions. Their negligence as to the infliction of due punishment upon him was offensive to God, to the pope, and to the emperor. Their manner also of requesting a general council was such as might give umbrage to his holy master. They had required that it should be called with the consent of the emperor, that it should be free, and that it should be held in a specified place. All this had the appearance of tying up the hands of his holiness. "I say," he added, "that the sentences of the pope and the emperor ought to be implicitly obeyed; the books of the heretics should be burned; and the printers and venders of them duly punished. There is no other way to suppress and extinguish this pernicious sect."

The reply of the legate gave great offence in the diet. They observed, that he had shown a quick sense of whatever seemed to threaten a diminution of the papal authority or papal emolument, but little disposition to relieve Germany from the grievous oppressions under which it laboured. Instead therefore of multiplying words in the form of a rejoinder, they said they had other business to transact of still greater consequence; and directed Cheregato to be content with their former resolution, till they could send a national memorial to the pope, and receive the answer of his holiness respecting all their grievances. It would then be seen what reliance ought to be placed on the fair promises of the nuncio of the Roman pontiff. Cheregato thought proper to quit Nuremberg before the memorial referred to was drawn up. His sudden departure was considered as disrespectful to the diet, and prognosticated an unfavourable issue to the whole business.

The German nation, in the time of the Emperor Maximilian, had exhibited a charge of ten grievances against the court of Rome. The number of these in the present

new memorial was increased to a hundred; and they form the CENTUM GRAVAMINA, so famous in the German annals. The articles of complaint—which related to the various and oppressive exactions, abuses of ecclesiastical patronage and of the power of excommunication, encroachments upon the civil authority, exemption of the ecclesiastics from liability to answer even in criminal causes, and other iniquitous practices of which the church of Rome has ever been guilty, where she has had the power to be so—were immediately despatched to Rome, accompanied with a concise but memorable protest, in which the diet gave his holiness to understand, that the burden complained of was become so insupportable that the princes and people neither COULD nor WOULD endure it any longer. These transactions were a decisive proof both of the declining power of the popedom, and of the hardy, and daring spirit which had arisen among the German nations in support of their civil and religious liberties.

The Elector of Saxony was not present at the diet of Nuremberg. The infirmities of his advanced age, the natural irresolution of his temper, and the prospect of contentious and troublesome scenes concerning Luther, will easily account for his absence. The pope was at this time excessively out of humour with this prince. He transmitted to him by Cheregato, from Nuremberg, two pontifical briefs; the former of which is expressed in the most severe, imperious, and insulting language; and the latter, which Pallavicini calls an affectionate letter, roundly charges the conscientious Frederic with the breach of a promise made to Cardinal Cajetan, that he would punish Luther as soon as ever he should be proscribed by the pope.*

Frederic was so much offended with these accusations of the pope, that he seems for a moment to have forgotten those discreet maxims by which he had constantly regulated his

* The former brief is given at length in Milner, v. 571-574. In it the pope recites, as among the monstrous enormities of Luther, that "he tells the people, that no man by fastings, prayers, lamentations, can satisfy an angry God, or redeem his sins; and that even the host of the sacrament is not an offering for sin." Here then Luther's charges against the church of Rome are explicitly confirmed by the pope himself. He closes his brief to Frederic with these words: "Repent, or expect to feel both the apostolic and imperial sword of vengeance," as well as "the burning of everlasting fire," with which he had previously threatened him.

conduct. He wrote to Planitz, his representative in the council of regency at Nuremberg, a letter in which he freely expressed his indignation at the contents of the pontifical brief. With more than ordinary warmth he declared that he had never imagined it possible he should receive so extraordinary an address, and wished the pope's legate to be told, that he himself would write to the council of regency, and express his readiness to appear before them and the emperor, for the purpose of defending his conduct against all unjust aspersions. The prudence of Planitz, however, suggested the danger of such a proceeding, and advised the elector to content himself with returning only general answers to the pope's objections. Frederic was easily persuaded to revert to his usual system of caution. Accordingly he transmitted his defence in writing to Adrian himself, expressed concisely, and in the most general terms; and to his legate Cheregato he directed a brief explanation to be given of the line of conduct which he had prescribed to himself throughout the whole business of Luther. He deemed it but decent to avoid all personal altercation with the pope; but to his legate he positively insisted that he had never made any other promise to Cajetan than that, "in the hope of putting an end to the ecclesiastical dissensions, he would stand engaged to compel Luther to appear before the cardinal at Augsburg."

This conscientious prince, amid all the doubts and difficulties which harassed his mind concerning the just limits of the papal jurisdiction, and several other questions relative to the rights of the ecclesiastics, steadily adhered to the grand practical maxim of implicitly obeying the revealed Word of God, and also of maintaining with zeal and fidelity the unrestrained publication of the same among the people. He was much displeased with some part of the diet's reply to Cheregato, particularly that which seemed to threaten the clergy with a species of inquisition that would inevitably fetter them in their preaching, and obstruct the free progress of the gospel; and he directed a formal protest to be entered in his name against every restraint of that kind.

The resolutions of the diet were made in March, 1523, and accorded with the answer which had been given to the pope's legate. They were called, notwithstanding the emperor's absence, The Edict of Charles V., and were printed

and published throughout Germany, together with the pope's brief, and his instructions to his nuncio, and with the answers and replies, and the Hundred Grievances.

These transactions and the publication of them were on the whole undoubtedly favourable to the reformation. Luther instantly saw his advantage, and availed himself of it with that undaunted courage which constantly marked his character; and also with a defensive dexterity which was the result of much experience in repelling the incessant attacks of his enemies. He published an address to the princes and nobles of Germany, in which he gratefully acknowledged the satisfaction which their late edict had afforded him; but he had observed, he said, that there were many persons, and even some of rank and distinction, who were disposed to wrest the mandates of the diet from their true meaning. "That meaning," said Luther, "is to me as clear as the light; and therefore I judge it highly expedient at this time to publish my sentiments on this matter, as also the sentiments of those who agree with me in interpreting the doctrines of the gospel. First, the edict directs us to teach the gospel in that sense which has been approved by the church of Christ. No mention is here made of Aquinas, Scotus, or even of the Romish church itself, but only of the church of Christ, and of the ancient interpreters of Christian doctrine. But our adversaries neither know what the gospel is, nor what were the doctrines of the ancient ecclesiastical writers. For our part we promise the most prompt obedience to the injunction; and through God's help we will keep our promise. But it is with grief I am compelled to own that the church of Rome cannot possibly obey this imperial edict. For, alas! they HAVE no preachers of the gospel. Moreover, if they were but willing to preach the pure gospel of Christ, there would at once be a most glorious termination of all our dissensions!

"Where likewise," continued Luther, "will the bishops find learned theologians to superintend the preachings of the clergy, and to correct their mistakes, by peaceable, mild, and affectionate exhortations, agreeably to both the letter and spirit of this edict? In vain will they look for such characters in the schools and monasteries, or universities. Besides, here is an entire change implied in the whole system of our ecclesiastical rulers. Their present system is

that of coercion, by flames, anathemas, and excommunications. "Had they treated me in the Christian manner now recommended by the princes, their own affairs would have been in a much better condition."

With respect to the marriage of the clergy, he entreats the princes to mitigate the severity of their decree. He is sure, he says, that many who were angry with him for not supporting the Romish system of celibacy, did they but know what he did of the interior practices of the monasteries, would instantly join him in wishing those hiding-places to be levelled with the ground. The consideration, however, of the diet in restraining the punishments of the married ecclesiastics to the penalties of the canon law, implies, he said, a severe animadversion on those cruel bishops and princes, who had hitherto been accustomed to torment such offenders against the pope's laws with perpetual imprisonments, and even with death itself, as if they had committed the most atrocious crimes.

But the greatest advantage which Luther and his cause derived from the decisions of the diet of Nuremberg was the virtual suspension of the imperial edict of Worms. This, in the present juncture, proved a heavy disappointment on the expectations of the papal party, and the rather as the duration of the suspension was in fact left undefined, depending on the proceedings of a future general council, the very assembling of which they sincerely deprecated, and at all times did their best to defer. Accordingly, Luther boldly asserted his right to draw this inference from the terms in which the princes had expressed their edict. "By this decree," said he, "I do maintain that Martin Luther stands absolved from all the consequences of the former decision of the pope and emperor, until a future council shall have tried his cause, and pronounced their definitive sentence."

On the other hand, the transactions of the diet of Nuremberg produced much discontent at Rome. The papal courtiers not only derided the childish simplicity of Adrian, in acknowledging disorders in the church, which he ought to have concealed, but also censured severely the impolitic expostulations of Cheregato in his reply to the answer of the princes. It was his duty, they said, in the matters of less importance to have given a favourable construction to some

expressions of the diet, and to have connived at others which were less defensible; and in the mean time to have stretched every nerve to the utmost to procure the condemnation of Luther: whereas, by making nice and subtle distinctions, and insisting too much on the precise explanation of particular words, he had increased the ill-humour of those determined audacious Germans, and had effected nothing to the advantage of the Roman see; nay, worse than nothing. The authority of the church was weakened; the sources of its wealth were stopped; and the heretics would doubtless become more daring and presumptuous than ever. These sagacious Italians were not much mistaken in their prognostication. Luther and his disciples, in all their controversial writings after this period, often appealed to the testimony of Adrian, and to the HUNDRED GRIEVANCES enumerated by the representatives of the Germanic body, in confirmation of what they affirmed respecting the abuses and corruptions of the Romish court. The pope himself, if we may credit his historian, was on the one hand astonished at the obstinacy of the reformers, and on the other, disgusted with the dissolute manners of his courtiers; and not being able to correct either the one or the other, sincerely wished himself again in the more humble situation of Dean of Louvain! His death, however, which occurred soon after he had received from his legate the account of what had passed at Nuremberg, early relieved him from these perplexities.

The diet, it appears, notwithstanding the mild, conciliatory terms of their edict, commissioned Faber, the grand vicar of the Bishop of Constance, to oppose Lutheranism throughout Germany. Emser also was meditating new hostilities. Luther, in a letter to Spalatinus, written probably in answer to fresh cautions which the late edict had elicited from the elector, adverts to these circumstances, and says, "It is impossible that I can be silent when the divine truth is in danger. To propagate the gospel is the sole object of all my writings. Moreover, the late edict itself expressly provides against all attempts to obstruct the progress of the gospel. For my part I have no fears. The doctrines which I teach I am sure are of God; and I am ready to suffer patiently on their account whatsoever it shall please Him to inflict upon me."

The elector and his court had also, it seems, apprehended so much danger to the reformer from the diet of Nuremberg, that they would gladly have persuaded him once more to return to a place of concealment. But "No," he says, in a letter to the same friend, "imagine not that I will again hide myself in a corner, however madly the monsters may rage. I perfectly well remember what I wrote to the prince from Borna; and I wish you would all be induced to believe it. You have now had the most manifest proofs that the hand of God is in this business; for this is the second year in which, beyond the expectation of every one, I am yet alive; and the elector is not only safe, but also finds the fury of his brethren of the Germanic body less violent than during the preceding year. Our prince has not designedly involved himself in this religious contest: no, it is by the providence of God alone that he finds himself at all concerned in it; and Jesus Christ will have no difficulty to defend him. However, if I could, without actually disgracing the gospel, perceive a way of separating him from my difficulties and dangers, I would not hesitate to give up my life. I had fully expected and hoped that within the year I should have been dragged to suffer death; and that was the method of liberating him from the danger to which I alluded in my letter, if indeed such would have been the consequence. It appears very plain that at present we are not able to investigate or comprehend the Divine counsels; and therefore it will be the safest for us to say, in the spirit of humble resignation, 'THY WILL BE DONE.'"

Thus did Luther, in the full conviction of the justice and importance of the cause which he supported, constantly look with a single eye to the protection of that Being through whose providence he was made an honoured instrument of the revival of Christian truth and liberty. He considered the triumph of the gospel as a certain and not distant event; he rejoiced in the prospect of it; he had not the smallest anxiety on account of his own personal safety; and he laboured to impress the mind of his prince with similar sentiments of pious expectation, confidence, and fortitude.

The situation of the Elector of Saxony was at this time such as to require all the encouragement and advice which his religious and political friends could supply. The Duke

George had almost persuaded the regency at Nuremberg to oblige Frederic to punish Luther. Planitz, during the sittings of the regency, informed his master, the elector, "that for the last three months, whenever any question had been moved respecting Luther, there had always broken out such a flaming spirit of obstinate resistance to the gospel, that he feared God in his anger would inflict some heavy judgment upon so irreligious a country." The members of this very regency, however, had in their late deliberations displayed a disposition so much more inclined to equity and moderation, that the confederation of zealous Roman Catholic powers, called the Suabian league, was supposed to be concerting violent measures, which had for their objects both the ruin of the Elector of Saxony and the dissolution of the regency of Nuremberg.—The conduct of the Duke George also was not a little suspicious. At Nuremberg he spoke freely of the danger with which his nephews Frederic and John were threatened, of losing their possessions and rank in the empire; and, on the extraordinary pretence that the princes whom Luther in his writings had charged with the commission of high crimes ought to prove themselves innocent before they were admitted to offices of trust and authority, he refused to take his seat in the regency. His real designs, however, were easily discerned through this political finesse. This affected scrupulosity of the duke was no doubt intended to facilitate the introduction of a resolution among the princes, that all persons proscribed by the edict of Worms (so much more grave a disqualification than the "calumnies" of Luther) should be deprived of their rights, privileges, and possessions. And then, if the nephews of George should eventually, on account of their attachment to the reformation, be plundered and degraded, their uncle might expect to be proportionably enriched and exalted, from their forfeited inheritance.*

How striking is the contrast, and how honourable to the cause of religion, when we compare the conduct of Frederic and of Luther at this period with that of their enemies! The elector, though oppressed with age and infirmities, was still in the full possession of his intellectual faculties, and

* This actually took place, in the person of his nephew, and next successor but one, Maurice.

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continued to merit the appellation of [illegible]. His penetrating eye foresaw the conspiracy which was then forming by the pope, the emperor, and [illegible] bigoted of the German princes, with the [illegible] crushing the infant reformation, and with it [illegible] that was friendly to its progress. But neither the firmness nor the integrity of this good prince, whenever the course he should steer seemed distinct and certain, could be shaken by the most alarming appearances. In this year, 1523, he is well known to have secretly meditated the defence of himself and his persecuted subjects even by force; but he was restrained by serious doubts concerning the lawfulness of using arms under his very peculiar circumstances. Hence he solemnly required Luther, Bugenhagen, and Melancthon to write their deliberate sentiments on the following question:—"Whether it was lawful for the Elector of Saxony, in case his subjects, on account of their religion, should suffer violence either from the emperor or any of the German princes, to protect them by arms." These great and good men decided at once that it was not lawful, and principally for these reasons: That the princes were not yet fully convinced in their consciences of the truth of the reformed system of evangelical doctrine; and that they, who in their own defence have recourse to arms, ought before all things to be assured of the justice of their cause: that their subjects had not implored their protection against violence and persecution: and that the several states of the provinces had not yet deliberated on the point.

Thus, notwithstanding the success with which the reformation had hitherto been attended, there seemed rising considerable obstacles to its further progress. Luther disdained to hide himself a second time from the fury of his adversaries; and Frederic, from scruples of conscience, did not dare to draw the sword in his defence. The clouds, however, which seemed to thicken, were soon dispersed, through the wise dispositions of that kind, overruling Providence on which Luther entirely relied, and which in its secret counsels had determined "to break the rod of the oppressor," and to bestow on the nations the blessings of revived Christian truth and Christian liberty. The emperor was so much involved in multiplied schemes of enterprise

and ambition, that he found it impossible to give any serious and durable attention to the contests in Germany; and it soon appeared, that without his active co-operation the rest of the confederates could effect nothing decisive. The apprehensions therefore of Frederic and his ministers respecting the safety of his electorate, or the necessity of a defensive war, were much relieved; and the patient industrious reformers had only to struggle with their usual difficulties, arising from the persecutions of such individuals as frequently happened to be the unfortunate victims of cruel bigots in possession of power.

In November, 1523, Julius de Medicis, who assumed the name of Clement VII., was placed in the vacant papal chair by very uncanonical means: and this circumstance, in addition to the aversion which popes usually have for councils, made him dread the scrutiny of an assembly, which might terminate in the annihilation of his authority. He determined therefore to elude the demands of the Germans by every possible means. He was himself much superior to Adrian in the arts of government; and, to effect his purposes the better, he made choice of Cardinal Campeggio, an able and artful negotiator, as his nuncio to the diet of the empire assembled again at Nuremberg near the close of the year.

The emperor was hindered by other concerns from being present at this diet. The Elector Frederic appeared early in the sittings; but on account of his infirmities and the confusion and turbulence of the proceedings, he left Nuremberg before any material business was concluded, and even before the arrival of the pope's legate.

The arrival of Campeggio was announced about the beginning of March, 1524. The princes, after mature deliberation, advised him by no means to enter Nuremberg with the accustomed pomp and ceremony, nor to bestow upon the inhabitants of the city his benedictions as he passed along; his proceedings of this kind having recently been treated with great indignity at Augsburg. The emperor's brother Ferdinand, on the arrival of the legate, reproached the senate of Nuremberg for their attachment to Lutheranism, and exhorted them to adhere to the ancient religious system: but they replied with firmness that they must not desert the truth. One of the preachers was bold enough to

affirm publicly in his sermon, that Antichrist entered Rome on the very day that the Emperor Constantine left it. From these incidents we may infer the actual progress of Lutheranism.

The new pontiff, however, had been nowise deficient in paying due attention to conciliate the German diet. Already he had despatched his trusty chamberlain, Jerome Rorarius, to announce his election to the popedom, and to signify his intention of sending to them soon after a dignified apostolic nuncio with full credentials. Rorarius was commissioned to deliver from the pope to the Elector Frederic a letter full of complimentary expressions, in which not so much as the name of Luther was mentioned. Campeggio also brought another letter from the pope, of like import, in which he earnestly entreated the elector to confer with his legate for the public good.

Frederic was not to be imposed on by such language as this. Before he withdrew from Nuremberg it is plain he had penetrated the designs of the pope and his advocates; for he left it in strict charge with his representative Feilitch, not only to have no conferences with Campeggio, but also to protest against any concessions which might be made by others to that artful legate. This good prince probably concluded, that in the existing circumstances more advantage would accrue to the cause of Christianity from his absence than his presence.*

Campeggio himself, there is no doubt, considered the departure of Frederic as an event most unfavourable to the object of his negotiations with the diet: and he expressed his disappointment in a flattering letter, in which he alluded to the reports spread of the elector's favouring the novel heresies, but declared that neither the pope nor himself could give the least credit to the imputation. "The scandalous and impious innovations," he says, "which I have observed in some parts of Germany, by no means affect my opinion of the princes and persons of distinction." His letter evinces how well qualified he was to execute the private instructions of Clement VII. in the present juncture. What those

* The adversaries of the reformation, well aware of the weight which the name of the Elector of Saxony would give to any measure, forged his signature in the register of the RECESSES, in spite of the protest of Feilitch.

instructions were, we learn from the grand papal advocate, Pallavicini. 1. They breathed nothing but severity and violence against Luther. The legate was directed to use his utmost endeavours to procure the execution of the edict of Worms. 2. He was to counteract every measure which tended to the appointment of a general council, or to the redress of the "Grievances." And these purposes of his mission Campeggio laboured incessantly, both in public and in private, to accomplish.

The diet, after listening to a number of unmeaning promises and declarations, desired to know the pope's intentions respecting the propositions which in the preceding year they had submitted for restoring peace to the church, and giving satisfaction to Germany. Campeggio replied, that he knew of no plan devised for composing the religious differences, except the edict of Worms. The execution of it ought, in his judgment, to be the first object of their deliberations. As to the memorial of grievances, he allowed that three copies of it had found their way to private persons, and that one of them had fallen into his own hands; but that the pope and cardinals considered it as the production of a private person, and by no means of the German princes. He had no instructions about it. There were articles in it which even bordered upon heresy; and the publication of them was highly disrespectful to the Roman see.

Charles V. was at this time very solicitous to gain the pope to his interests; and therefore both his own ambassador and his brother Ferdinand warmly seconded Campeggio in his complaints against the German princes for their lenity towards the disciples of Luther. The envoy of the Elector of Saxony, on the other hand, urged with great spirit, that the edict of Worms had been obtained by an artifice of the bishops against the sense of the diet, and that it had never yet been communicated to the elector and his brother John; whereas that important resolution at Nuremberg, which enjoined the preaching of the gospel in its purity, was the result of the most mature deliberation, and had been published everywhere. In the end, the RECESS, or final decree, of this diet was as favourable to the reformation as the former. The members promised to observe the edict of Worms AS FAR AS THEY COULD; renewed their demands of a general council; and appointed the eleventh of November

next ensuing for a new assembly of the states of the empire, which should meet at Spires, and make temporary regulations of all matters in dispute, until the council could be summoned. The words, "as far as they could," were highly displeasing to the papal party. "They were inserted," says Maimbourg, "that men might be at full liberty to do *nothing* in obedience to the edict of Worms; and so it actually turned out."

Never perhaps were the resolutions of any assembly received with less approbation than those of this diet. The emperor, in letters to his brother Ferdinand and the Elector of Saxony, expressed the utmost indignation at what had passed; absolutely forbade the princes to assemble at Spires, as they had proposed; and enjoined the strictest observance of the edict of Worms. Frederic, by returning a modest and respectful answer, together with a copy of the protest made by his envoy against the recess, warded off the violence of Charles; who must have found it difficult to blame this prince for protesting against a decree which he himself, though for very different reasons, so much disapproved.

At Rome the news of the edict of Nuremberg produced both alarm and astonishment. Clement, regarding the intended assembly at Spires as a new ecclesiastical tribunal erected in opposition to the legitimate authority of the pope, instantly summoned his cardinals to deliberate on the measures which might be most fit to prevent so dangerous an innovation. The conclave soon showed their capacity for the management of intrigues and secular politics. They directed Campeggio to collect together in Germany all the princes, bishops, and others who adhered to the cause of Rome, and to give them fair promises respecting a future council; but at the same time to represent to them the great difficulty of calling one in time of war. Their grievances, he might say, would be redressed at Rome; and he was to conjure them, above all things, to prevent if possible the discussion of any articles of religion in the assembly at Spires; and lastly, he was to endeavour to retard the meeting of that assembly, or to hinder it altogether if he could.

For the same purpose the pope resolved to apply to the kings of England and Portugal; and as the virtuous Elector of Saxony was not to be gained either by menace or flattery, he appears to have meditated his degradation from the

electoral dignity, by pronouncing him a heretic. This was the explicit advice of Aleander.

Luther himself was as little satisfied as the pope with the determinations of the diet; and Maimbourg admits that he had very good reason for discontent. "For if the edict of Worms, which had pronounced him a heretic, was to be enforced against him, why had the diet directed the merits of his writings to be inquired into in the future assembly at Spires? And, again, if an inquiry of this kind was in itself a proper measure, why was he to be condemned and punished previously to the trial which was to determine his guilt or innocence?"

Our undaunted reformer had no sooner received a copy of the decree of the diet, than he caused it to be printed along with the edict of Worms, and added many vehement and severe observations of his own. He treated those who thought of executing the edict of Worms as men who had lost their senses, and were as outrageous and absurd as the giants who made war against heaven. He exhorted his Christian countrymen to pray for the infatuated unhappy princes. The princes themselves he entreated, in the name of that God who governs the world and judges our secret thoughts, to review and to amend their conduct. "Alas!" he says, "that princes of the Christian name should have recourse to such detestable measures as these two decrees. Unhappy Germans, who have endured for so many years the abominable haughty yoke of insulting pontiffs, and yet take no pains to shake it from your necks! What, after having been pillaged so often, and exhausted of the very marrow of your bones, will no prayers, admonitions, or remonstrances move you to take care of yourselves, but you must employ all your vengeance upon such a poor wretch as Luther! Go on, if it must be so: here am I; I shall not run away. I shall resign my life most willingly, and migrate to my eternal inheritance, whenever it shall please God to pronounce my hour to be come. Through the Divine goodness I am less alarmed at the thought of death than I used to be: but let those who would destroy me reflect, whether my blood may not leave a stain which neither they nor their children shall be able to wash away. God will not be mocked; and ye know not but he may be pleased to ordain that the murder of Luther shall be followed by the heaviest national calamities."

Cardinal Campeggio, for the purpose of eluding the remonstrances of the Germans and their demands of the redress of grievances, brought forward, during the conferences at Nuremberg, certain constitutions for the amendment of some disorders and abuses which prevailed among the inferior clergy; but they were rejected by the diet, as tending on the whole to effect no substantial reform, and rather to increase the ecclesiastical dominion, and pave the way for greater extortions of money. This active legate, however, did not abandon the cause he had to support. Having failed to influence the votes of the diet as he had hoped, his next object was to secure, if possible, a determined confederacy of the friends of the pope. With this view he collected together, in July, 1524, at Ratisbon, the emperor's brother Ferdinand and the two dukes of Bavaria, the Archbishop of Salzburg, and several other prelates or their representatives. These, at the instance of the cardinal, bound themselves by a new declaration to execute rigorously the edict of Worms against Luther and his followers; to adhere to the ancient usages in administering the sacraments; to punish the apostate monks and married priests; to recall from Wittemberg, under heavy penalties for disobedience, all such students as were their own subjects; and lastly, among other resolutions, they determined to afford no asylum to banished Lutherans; and, in case of rebellion, to protect and assist one another with all their force. At the same time the confederates agreed to receive and publish the legate's constitutions, before mentioned, for the reformation of the clergy—a mere palliative, designed to amuse and sooth the people.

The confederation of Ratisbon, considered as a political device of the papal government, was managed by Campeggio, no doubt, with much ability and address. The formation of it was, however, an event of which neither that artful legate, nor his more artful master in the Romish conclave, seems to have foreseen the consequences. While they were flattering themselves with having cemented a league of the most powerful supporters of the ancient ecclesiastical system, they forgot that they were giving the signal for an avowed and permanent disunion among the various potentates and orders of Germany. The seceders comprehended but a small part of the imperial states; and their

proceedings were altogether irregular. The few had not only unjustly assumed the right of making general orders for the many, but had neglected matters of the greatest importance to the community: they had done nothing to remove the real and principal grievances so long complained of, neither had they applied to the minor abuses their true remedies. It was this view of the proceedings at Ratisbon which roused the much more numerous imperial deputies who favoured Lutheranism, and who had dissented from Campeggio in the late diet, to form soon after a similar convention at Spires. There, in the same month of July, they assembled, and in concert with one another, and in opposition to their papal adversaries, explained the decrees of Nuremberg in favour of growing Protestantism.

The Ratisbon party, it is well known, were far from being influenced by what are sometimes called motives of pure and honest bigotry. The dignity and authority of the popedom were manifestly at stake. The ambitious schemes of Charles V. required him to purchase the concurrence of the pope at any price. Ferdinand was then secretly using every art to secure his own election as king of the Romans, and thus the succession to the imperial dignity. The two dukes of Bavaria, who had hitherto permitted the public sale of Luther's books in their dominions, were now bribed to proscribe them, and to obstruct the further progress of his doctrine, by a subsidy from their higher clergy of one-fifth of all their revenues during the space of five years: and in return for this ample contribution, the rich ecclesiastical dignitaries were further gratified by not only being allowed to escape all reformation themselves, but also by the enacting of Campeggio's new and rigorous laws against the inferior parochial preachers—a shameful partiality, by which the domineering authority of the hierarchy was augmented, and the condition of the indigent laborious ministers was rendered more humiliating and dependent. Though the motives which produced the opposite convention at Spires, it is to be feared, were in some instances not altogether Christian and disinterested, yet were they in general truly laudable and patriotic, and favourable to national liberty; and, in regard to many of the states of the empire, they proceeded from a desire of establishing a pure and reformed religion. This division of Germany into two parties, though

it certainly weakened the force of the empire, and laid the foundation of many incurable suspicions and jealousies, was nevertheless, under Providence, extremely favourable to the progress of the reformation. The pious and modest student of history often discovers such a satisfactory evidence of a Divine hand in the direction of human affairs, as entirely escapes both the profane skeptic and the conceited philosopher.

Luther had now reason to consider his personal safety at Wittemberg as abundantly better secured. The evasive decree of the last diet, "that they would observe that edict as far as they could," was soon interpreted to mean that they could not observe it; and this answer, in explicit terms, was returned to the Archduke Ferdinand by the princes who favoured the reformation, after that they had received the indignant letters of Charles V. Any satisfaction, however, afforded to our great reformer by considerations of the safety of his person was very little, compared with that which he derived from hearing multiplied delightful accounts of the success of the gospel in various parts.

The two northern kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden were now uniting themselves to the cause of Protestantism; and as the religious revolutions in those regions were brilliant and rapid, they must, no doubt, eventually have been productive of much spiritual good. Little, however, beyond the political and external circumstances has found its way into authentic history.

In the year 1522, at the request of Christiern II., king of Denmark, a preacher named Martin was sent from Wittemberg; and his evangelical labours among the Danes received the royal approbation and encouragement. But the enormous vices of this prince, which would have disgraced any religious system, proved an effectual bar to the progress of the reformation. Expelled from his throne on account of his tyranny, profligacy, and cruelties, and forced to wander through a foreign country in want and disgrace, he discovered some symptoms of compunction and even of repentance—at least during his intercourse with his religious friends. We find him in the year 1523 visiting his uncle, the Elector of Saxony, at Schweinitz, a town belonging to this prince; and in the autumn of that year he sent for Luther from Wittemberg, and heard him preach at the same

town, with so great satisfaction that he declared he had never before in his whole life heard the gospel so explained; that he should never forget that sermon; and that, with God's help, he should endure more patiently whatever might befall him. His public apology, or defence of his conduct, however, dispersed throughout Germany, though to the last degree affecting and lamentable, exhibits but little of the spirit of a truly humble penitent. His queen, the sister of the Emperor Charles V., and of Ferdinand Archduke of Austria, was a person of a different character. She was compelled to seek an asylum out of Denmark with her exiled husband. After being exposed to imminent peril in a violent storm at sea, and reduced to the last extremity, she came to Nuremberg, to implore the help of her brother Ferdinand and of the German princes. But, unfortunately for this object, she had received many of Luther's books from Albert Duke of Prussia; had made an open profession of the reformed religion; and in 1524 had publicly received the sacrament in both kinds. This last step so provoked Ferdinand that he told her in plain terms, "He heartily wished she was not his sister:" and declared he would rather she had been sunk in the depths of the sea, than that she should have conversed with Luther. "Certainly," replied the queen, "we are descended from one and the same mother; nevertheless, I must adhere closely to the Word of God, and to that ONLY, without the least respect to persons: in all other concerns I am ready to obey my brother's pleasure; and if on that account he refuses to own me for his sister, I shall endeavour to bear the cross with patience." On the subject of her own calamitous situation, as well as that of her husband, she is said to have expressed herself so pathetically before the princes as to have drawn tears from every one present. She obtained from them however no satisfactory promises of assistance: and this excellent queen soon after departed this life, her death being probably hastened by affliction and misfortune, and by the unkind treatment of her nearest relations. The reflection of Luther on the case of Christiern may deserve to be transcribed—"Perhaps," said he, "God in his appointed time will call this king and queen to his heavenly kingdom, that He may appear marvellous in confounding the measures of human foresight; for most certainly he is a king of whose sound

and thorough reformation our judgments could never reasonably have formed any favourable conjectures."

On returning into Denmark and making some attempts to recover his throne, Christiern was taken prisoner, and ended his days in captivity. His nephew, Frederic Duke of Holstein, succeeded him in the throne of Denmark; and under him, and still more under his successor, Christiern III., the blessed change of the religious establishment was completed in that kingdom.

The religious revolutions of HOLSTEIN, a duchy bordering on Denmark, likewise well deserve a place in this narrative. Several students of divinity from that country, induced by the fame of Luther's talents and learning, had visited the university of Wittemberg. On their return, it soon appeared that they had caught the salutary flame which had already exhilarated the hearts of so many foreigners. Both in public and in private, among their countrymen, they most industriously spread the doctrine they had learned from their great Saxon master.

Herman Tast was the first who, in the year 1522, finding the church at Husum shut against him by the popish clergy, preached boldly, under a tree in the churchyard, a course of excellent sermons to a numerous audience. Two years after, this same pastor also preached at Gardingen the first public sermon, composed according to the sound principles of the reformed religion, which was ever delivered in a regular way from the pulpit in that country. Frederic I., King of Denmark and Duke of Holstein, had in the same year, 1524, made it a capital offence for any person to take away the life or injure the property or dignity of another on account of his religion, whether papal or Lutheran. This prince, in matters of religion, allowed all his subjects complete liberty. They were so to conduct themselves as best to satisfy their own consciences before God. At the same time he ordered the most solemn and explicit directions to be given, that the errors of the Romish church should be publicly reprobated, and the evangelical doctrines of the reformers recommended to the people. But the inhabitants of Ditmarsen, an intractable race of men, refused to obey the king's edict; and, at the instigation and under the leading of their clergy, seized in the dead of night, and without trial, and with every species of barbarity, committed

to the flames Henry Muller, commonly called Henry of Zutphen, a zealous preacher of pure Christianity, who had formerly been prior of the monastery at Antwerp, had afterward preached two years at Bremen, and lastly had been introduced among the Ditmarsians by their superintendent, a man of piety and religion.* In other parts of Frederic's dominions the royal edict was dutifully obeyed, and proved a great bulwark against the violence and cruelty of the papists. Under its protection the Lutheran ministers confronted their adversaries in the method of fair argumentation; and were wonderfully successful in propagating divine truth. Even some of the Roman champions acknowledged their convictions, and bowed to the authority of reason and Scripture.

In SWEDEN, the renowned Gustavus Vasa, having in his youth lived an exile at Lubec, and there gained some information concerning the grounds of Lutheranism; and having afterward been further instructed by Laurentius and Olaus Petri, two brothers, disciples of Luther, no sooner saw himself in firm possession of the throne than he determined to reform the church. Under his auspices a public disputation was held at Upsal, between Olaus Petri on the one side, in support of Luther's system, and Peter Gallè on the other, as a defender of the papal dogmas; and the sum of their argumentation was afterward published. Also, by the king's order, Andreas his chancellor was employed in translating the Scriptures into the Swedish language; and no means were omitted for enlightening the minds of the people. The effects were rapid and decisive, and Sweden from that day has ranked invariably among the Protestant nations.

This glorious triumph of religious truth took not place, however, without much clamour and opposition from the established hierarchy. The dignified clergy and their adherents, in the convocation of Upsal, boldly maintained that no person, under pain of excommunication and eternal damnation, could on any account whatever deprive the prelates of their wealth and privileges. The monks and the rest of the papal clergy everywhere calumniated their excellent king as a heretic, unworthy of the throne. In

* See the account at large, Milner, v. 578–582.

Dalecarlia they even excited the people to seditious and treasonable practices; insomuch that the inhabitants of many provinces became so disaffected to the government that they refused to pay their annual taxes.

Yet the Swedish monarch had already done every thing in the cause of Christian truth which could be expected from a pious, wise, and magnanimous prince. Like David, he had begun with reforming his own court, and suffered none but religious characters to approach his person, or to fill the great offices of state. He had instituted a general visitation of the whole country BY HIMSELF, in which he was accompanied by evangelical preachers, and particularly by the excellent Olaus Petri, whom he had previously appointed Secretary of Stockholm. In adopting this measure, the king had proposed the instruction of his ignorant subjects in the great principles of the Christian religion, and to guard them against erroneous notions concerning faith and works, and predestination; and also against the innumerable corruptions of the Romish church. In the execution of it he had listened to the advice of the experienced German reformers; namely, not to hurt the tender consciences of the well-meaning but uninformed part of the people by an over-hasty abolition of such ceremonies and superstitions as might be suffered to remain without manifest impiety.

At this moment the situation of Sweden was truly critical. On the one hand an enthusiastical zeal for innovation among persons resembling the German anabaptists, and on the other, a blind attachment to superstitious ceremonies, inflamed the minds of many, and divided them into parties; and there was constantly at hand an active, ambitious, and powerful clergy, ready to take every advantage of these internal dissensions. It soon appeared, however, that even in this perilous conjuncture there existed in Gustavus a combination of qualities fully equal to the emergency.

In Sweden, the higher clergy, by repeated grants from a superstitious nobility, were become opulent, dissolute, and luxurious; and, moreover, they possessed so many castles and places of strength that they were able, at any time, to excite dangerous commotions in the kingdom, and even to give laws to the sovereign himself. On the other hand, the men of rank and family were impoverished beyond

example, through the rapacity of a devouring, insatiable hierarchy. It was in vain, therefore, until this enormous power of the numerous prelates, acting in concert with the Roman pontiff at their head, was restrained within moderate bounds, to expect any substantial reformation of the ecclesiastical establishment, or even any good order in the country.

Gustavus, therefore, in the summer of the year 1527, at the convocation of Arosen, summoned together all the constituted orders and authorities, ecclesiastical and civil, in his dominions, with the full purpose of bringing to speedy issue the important question concerning the regulation of the doctrines, the revenues, and the powers of the church. He directed the senators of the kingdom to be placed next to the throne, and the bishops next to the senators. The nobles occupied the third class, the parochial clergy the fourth, and the commons the fifth. This arrangement was an unpardonable offence in the eyes of the bishops; and the extraordinary measure which they instantly adopted, in consequence, strongly marks both the domineering spirit and the bad faith of the Roman Catholic clergy. They met secretly in the church of St. Giles, to deliberate on their present situation. "What is to be done, my brethren?" said the Bishop of Linkoping, "it is plain enough the king means to degrade us: he means to take from us those castles and fortified places which pious kings have of old granted to the bishops of this country; and probably his next step will be to deprive us of our lands and revenues. If we acquiesce in this we shall bring upon ourselves the indignation and eternal anathema of the Roman pontiff. Make your choice then, brethren, never to disobey the pope: he is the asylum of the church, and he will defend you." Every one present declared his firm resolution to defend the Roman pontiff and the established hierarchy; and they subscribed a solemn protest against any degradation of their dignity, or diminution of their revenues. They then buried the writing under a sepulchre, covered it with stones, and took a solemn oath not to reveal the secret. But it was dug up fifteen years afterward, and shown to Gustavus.

In this memorable convocation, Gustavus, through his chancellor, set forth the enormous disorders which prevailed.

He wished, he said, the faithful, laborious clergy to be well rewarded; at the same time that he would have the ignorant, the idle, and the useless to be deprived of the revenues which they so undeservedly possessed, and which ought to be applied to the public service. If a speedy emendation to this effect were not agreed to by the bishops and senate, he would no longer undertake the government of the country. On this head, therefore, he required a clear and categorical answer. Upon hearing the king's proposal the convocation was almost in an uproar. The prelates and other papal adherents cried, No! No! with the utmost clamour, and called loudly on the leading men of the country to withstand such unjust innovations. But Gustavus had formed his resolution, from which even the splendour of a crown could not induce him to depart. He came into the assembly, and there publicly resigned the government of the kingdom. With some warmth, but with great decency and firmness, he informed them that he had made his choice, and that his conscience did not permit him to support a superstitious and depraved system of religion. He added, that he had determined to leave the country, but expected them to pay him the price of his hereditary possessions.

The great body of the Swedish representatives were now so much enraged at the conduct of the refractory bishops, as to signify to them, in terms by no means obscure, that if they did not instantly comply with the pleasure of their beloved sovereign, they would soon feel the vengeance of the people inflicted on their obstinacy and disobedience. It was agreed that Peter Gallè and Olaus Petri should once more try their strength publicly, in dispute on the question of ecclesiastical power and privilege, as they had formerly done on the controverted points of evangelical doctrine. This free discussion had a mighty influence on all the members of the convocation, except the most violent and determined partisans of popery, who on the third day of the session were completely overpowered with numbers. This memorable assembly concluded its proceedings by humbly beseeching Gustavus to resume his government, and by precisely defining the ecclesiastical privileges and revenues.

The reformation in Sweden continued to proceed with vigour and discretion, under the protection of Gustavus

Vasa, and principally through the advice of his secretary Olaus Petri. The latter, in the year 1529, published a more distinct explanation of the great Christian doctrine of justification by faith, and also a new ritual in the Swedish language, in which the official rules for marriage, baptism, burial of the dead, and the administration of the Lord's Supper were very much cleared from Romish superstitions and encumbrances.

In HUNGARY, even in the year 1522, the fame of the deliverance of various states and provinces from papal chains had excited in the minds of the people an ardent desire, not only to become partakers of the pure reformed religion, but also to see Luther himself, from whose instructions they expected to derive, in the easiest and happiest way, the best system of heavenly doctrine, and the wisest method of cultivating sacred learning. Martin Cyriac is particularly mentioned among the young students who came from this country to Wittemberg, with the intention of consulting Luther and hearing his lectures.

Lewis, the King of Hungary and Bohemia, was a bitter enemy of the reformers; but Divine Providence raised them up an excellent and powerful patron in George Marquis of Brandenburg. This illustrious prince began about this time to discover a relish for evangelical knowledge; and as he was grand-master of the royal household, he had frequent opportunities of softening or entirely doing away the charges and complaints which were frequently laid before the king against the disciples of Luther.

Under his auspices, and those of the Dukes of Lignitz and Munsterberg, a considerable reformation took place among the churches in SILESIA, and particularly at Breslau, the capital city of that country; and it appears that in the succeeding year the inhabitants of these regions were blessed with an additional influx of the salutary and refreshing light of the gospel. We must not omit to mention John Thurzo, Bishop of Breslaw. This excellent prelate was descended from a noble family in Hungary, and is said to have been the very first papal bishop who in his diocess was favourable to the revival of pure Christianity. Our knowledge of him is derived from two short epistles, one from Luther, and another from Melancthon, addressed to him so early as the year 1520. He did not live to

receive either of them; and Luther, on the occasion of his decease, says in a letter to a friend, "In this faith died John Thurzo, Bishop of Breslaw, of all the bishops of this age the very best." Melancthon's letter to Thurzo contains the following sentence: "Who is there that does not think highly of the man who, as far as I know, is the only person in Germany that by his authority, learning, and piety has exhibited an example of what a bishop ought to be?"

The successor of Thurzo, James of Saltza, trod in his steps. This bishop appointed, with the entire approbation of the inhabitants, John Hesse of Nuremberg, a learned doctor of divinity, and an esteemed friend of Luther, to preach the gospel in the church of St. Mary Magdalen at Breslau. Hesse not only explained and enforced the great truths of Christianity from the pulpit, but for eight days together, in a public disputation, defended the same, and exposed the papal dogmas concerning the mass and the celibacy of the clergy. These proceedings and appointments at Breslau were highly offensive to the pope: but his censures had no other effect than to induce the magistrates to defend their conduct in a printed apology, which contains a most lively description of the corrupt manners of their former pastors, as well as of the wretched state of the ecclesiastical government in general. John Hesse continued in the pastoral office to which he had been appointed till his death, in 1547.

The beginnings of an evangelical revival in so important a kingdom as FRANCE deserve to be noticed. But as the Helvetic and Calvinistic denomination soon prevailed there above the Lutheran, our present narrative has no further concern with it than to show the extensiveness of the Lutheran reformation, which doubtless had great influence in the production of Christian piety in that country. In the city of Meaux, Faber Stapulensis, Farel, and a few others had begun to sow the seeds of pure Christianity even during the year 1523; and they appear to have been favoured by their bishop, William Briçonet. But Francis I. King of France severely rebuked this prelate for having countenanced the novel teachers: upon which, William not only withdrew his protection from the reformers, but promised to banish them from the country. Faber fled to

Nerac in Gascony, where he found support from the king's sister, Margaret of Navarre, whose views of religion were extremely different from those of her brother. Farel found an asylum in Switzerland, and became there the reformer of Geneva, and of that part of the country where the French language is spoken.

Luther had been informed by a French gentleman of great zeal in the cause of true religion, that Charles Duke of SAVOY was very favourably inclined to the ecclesiastical reformation. Such an opportunity was not to be lost; and accordingly he wrote to the duke a congratulatory letter, of considerable length, in which he distinctly unfolds the doctrine which he taught, with its practical uses, vindicates it against misrepresentation and calumny, and in his usual emphatical language lays open a variety of papal abuses. The conclusion of this admirable letter may deserve to be transcribed. "These, illustrious prince, are the chief doctrines which I would wish you most strenuously to patronise in public, as indeed you have already begun to do. But let there be no compulsion: let there be no recourse to the sword: in that way nothing will prosper. All I request is, that under the government of your majesty those who sincerely preach the gospel may be protected and known to be in no danger. This is the way in which Christ will destroy Antichrist, 'by the breath of his mouth;' and thus, as it is in Daniel, he shall be 'broken without hand,'—even he 'whose coming is with lying wonders.' Satan will not cast out Satan. Devils must be cast out by the finger of God. Go on, brave prince; and from the spark which already burns within you, kindle a holy, evangelical flame, which, issuing from the house of Savoy, may spread throughout all France. May the Lord Jesus Christ pour his Spirit into your heart, that you may do every thing to the glory of his sacred WORD!"*

While things were proceeding thus favourably in foreign countries, fresh supporters of the reformer and his cause

* Luther and his informant must have been strangely deceived concerning his present correspondent. This was the same Duke of Savoy whose tyranny and cruelties (carried on at this very time) drove the citizens of Geneva into independence and freedom, and thus, contrary to all his wishes, made way for the establishment of the reformation among them. See Continuation of Milner, chap. xxii. (vol. iii.)—J. S.

were rising up nearer home. It was about the middle of the year 1524, that the Landgrave of HESSE began to profess a decided approbation of the reformed religion. He had visited Luther at Worms, conversed on doctrinal points (as the reformer tells us) with a jocose levity, and on his departure had given him his hand, using these words, "If your cause be good, may God protect you." But now, enlightened by Luther's writings, he enjoined his preachers, in a public proclamation, to confine themselves to the clear, simple doctrine of our Saviour and his apostles. A Franciscan monk undertook to reclaim him, by putting into his hands what he called an approved treatise on religion, and exhorting him to imitate the kings and princes in Italy, France, and Spain, who had agreed to inflict exemplary punishment on the Lutherans. The landgrave replied, that he had read the book, but found little in it that accorded with the charitable spirit of a true Christian; that he had no design to leave ancient customs which were founded in Scripture; that he could not agree with the monk in denying the doctrine of justification by faith alone, because the words of Scripture were express on that head; that he highly disapproved of his representing the Virgin Mary as a mediator between God and man, and the gospel as a thing that ought not to be preached to the common people; both which points, he said, were directly contrary to the written Word.

Albert Marquis of Brandenburg, grand-master of the Teutonic order, and brother of the Marquis George, before mentioned as a zealous promoter of the reformation in Silesia, was at the late diet at Nuremberg. Political emergencies were the immediate cause of his presence: during his stay he took the opportunity of often hearing Osiander, a teacher of the reformed doctrine, preach; and as he had already conversed with Luther, and read his books with attention, he now became an open and avowed defender of the reformation; more especially after Luther, in an elaborate epistle, had resolved certain doubts which the marquis had proposed to him respecting the pontifical jurisdiction. PRUSSIA soon felt the happiest effects from the operation of Albert's religious sentiments. Long ago the pagans of that country had been compelled by the sanguinary Teutonic knights to become nominal Christians, but, under the pro-

tection and encouragement of Albert, a substantial change, both in doctrine and practice, commenced among them, and gained ground with great rapidity. Lutheran divines laboured in the Prussian territories with much success; and George de Polentz, Bishop of Samland, so much distinguished himself by his evangelical exertions that he may truly be called the father of the reformation in that country. On the other hand, Maurice Bishop of Ermland, a province of Prussia, published a most violent declaration against Luther and his disciples; in which, with the most horrid imprecations, he devotes to the Divine vengeance all those who should adhere to the cause of those pernicious schismatics.

During this turbulent season, and amid many private afflictions, Luther appears to have stood constantly at the helm of the infant Protestant churches, and to have directed their course with a most watchful eye. In 1523 he sent into Prussia the excellent John Brisman, who laboured for many years in the country, to the great advantage of Christian truth and liberty. In less than a year after, he further deputed thither Paul Sperat, who for preaching the gospel in Moravia had been condemned to a noisome dungeon at Olmutz, by the persecuting bishop of that city. Paul was made Bishop of Pomesane, and continued a zealous labourer in the vineyard of Christ for about twenty-six years. John Poliander, who had been the amanuensis of Eckius, in the disputation at Leipzig, became a useful coadjutor of Brisman and Sperat; and it was through the instructions of these three evangelical instruments of the Divine will that the good Bishop of Samland was enabled to effect so wonderful a change in religion as he did in a very short time. Luther, in his letters, speaks of the reformation in Prussia with triumphant satisfaction and delight. "At length," he says, to Spalatinus, "one bishop has come forward, and with a single eye given himself up to the cause of Christ and his gospel in Prussia. The kingdom of Satan declines fast in that country."

While Campeggio was at Nuremberg, a case was brought before him from STRASBURG, which demonstrates at once the licentiousness of the Romish clergy of those times, and the corrupt maxims on which the ecclesiastical judges acted, and which in the issue materially contributed to help forward

the reformation of that city. Several of the sacerdotal order at Strasburg had married, and thus exposed themselves to the censures of their indignant superiors in the church. The bishop had summoned the culprits to appear before him, and to hear his sentence against them for their traitorous disobedience to the Divine Majesty and their own sacred order. The married clergy entreated the senate of Strasburg to interfere on their behalf, and to procure them a fair hearing. They were willing, they said, even to suffer death, if they should be found to have broken the commands of God in this matter. The senate complied with their request, and informed the bishop that any attempt to punish them in the summary way proposed could not be carried into execution without the utmost danger of a tumult, especially as many others of the clergy were known to live openly with harlots, and yet had incurred no ecclesiastical censures. The bishop upon this complained to the legate of being hindered by the senate from exercising his just authority. The legate supported the bishop, and insisted on it, as the duty of the senate, that they should assist him in carrying his sentence into execution; contenting himself with replying to representations of the deputies, that the guilt of the married clergy was not the less because others did wrong. He admitted that it was a usual thing for the German bishops to receive money from the ecclesiastics of their diocesses, as the price of being allowed to keep concubines; for which, he said, they would at some time be called to account: but he affirmed that it was a much greater fault in a priest to become the husband of a woman, than to keep many concubines in his house; for the married priest defended his conduct as right, whereas the other knew and admitted that he was doing wrong! To this unexampled effrontery the deputies dryly replied, "When the bishop shall begin to punish the whoremongers, then the senate may be able to support him with more advantage in his lawful animadversions upon others."

Such infatuated conduct of the Roman hierarchy could not fail to promote the progress of the reformation. Accordingly, the senate of Strasburg soon after this transaction completed the Protestant system in that large and populous city, where Hedio, Bucer, Capito, and other pious pastors were labouring with great success: and such was

the reputation of the theologians of Strasburg that Faber Stapulensis, before mentioned, and Gerard Roussel were sent privately from France, by Margaret of Navarre, for the express purpose of conversing on the grand points of divinity with Bucer and Capito. The issue of the conference was, that these pious divines gave to one another the right hand of fellowship; and thus, says Scultetus, some shoots of the evangelical vine were transmitted from the city of Strasburg, and took root among the churches of France. Doctor Sebastian Meyer, a celebrated preacher in the Franciscan church at Strasburg, made a public retraction of his papistical tenets in the year 1524: an event which very much strengthened the faith of the converts to the new system of sound doctrine. Meyer enumerated ten articles of the Romish corruptions, renounced them all, and boldly published, at Berne, in Switzerland, his confutation of them from Scripture.

The cross, however, the constant attendant, in some shape or other, on true religion, was now severely felt by the Lutherans in every place where papal enmity had an opportunity of exerting itself with effect. In Hungary and Bohemia Lewis inflicted great severities on such of his subjects as received the Protestant tenets. In Misnia and Thuringia the unrelenting George of Saxony laboured to extirpate evangelical truth by imprisonment, fines, banishment, and at length by capital punishments. Even his brother Henry Duke of Friberg, who had shown some symptoms of good-will to the reformers, overawed by this determined persecutor, ejected from his house and the company of his duchess three ladies of noble birth, merely because they had been guilty of reading Luther's books. Similar severities were practised in other parts, particularly at Miltenberg, in the electorate of Mentz; the Protestants of which town are said to have been the first who were exposed to the violence of the military on account of their religion. John Draco, their pastor, fled to save his life; and Luther wrote to his afflicted congregation an admirable consolatory letter, in which he declares, that it would soon appear that, if in one place the doctrine of the Word was oppressed, it would rise again in ten others.

But the persecution of FLANDERS was the most ferocious. There Alcander, armed with the authority of the pope, and

supported by the united power of the Inquisition and of the civil government, exercised the vengeance of the hierarchy without mercy. For example, at Antwerp, a certain person had been in the habit of explaining the gospel on Sundays to a vast concourse of people. An express order was issued to forbid the practice. The people, however, met in the dock-yards; and as their usual preacher or expositor did not make his appearance, a zealous youth, named Nicolas, placed himself in a boat near the shore, and addressed the audience in a very pious manner, from the chapter concerning the five loaves and two fishes: but the very next day he was ordered to be seized, and put into a sack lest he should be known by the people; and in that state he was suddenly thrown into the river. The writings of Luther had infected the Augustinian monks at Antwerp. Some of them were imprisoned, and recanted; but three, in spite of persuasion, threats, and long confinement, remained steadfast; and were in consequence publicly stripped of their holy orders, and declared heretics on a scaffold at Brussels, in the year 1523. Two of the three, Henry Voes and John Esch, cheerfully underwent the fiery trial on the same day, testifying an admirable constancy. This was the first blood that was shed in the Low Countries in the cause of religion, since the rise of Luther.

The name of the third was Lambert, who, according to Luther, received the crown of martyrdom in like manner at the stake, four days after. Erasmus says he was taken back to prison, and there privately despatched. This author, who certainly hated these abominable cruelties of the papists, observes upon the occasion, that Brussels had been most perfectly free from heretics till this event; but that many of the inhabitants immediately after began to favour Lutheranism.

Luther, in memory of these faithful servants of God, composed a Latin hymn, which has been much used in the Protestant churches. He likewise dispersed a circular letter among the brethren in Holland, Brabant, and Flanders; in which he says, "Blessed be God; we, who have hitherto been worshipping idols, celebrated by men of a pretended sanctity, have seen and heard of real saints and martyrs in our own age." To another confessor, then in bonds for the gospel, he writes about the same time: "Wretched me!

(who am said to have first taught these things), that I should be the last, and perhaps never thought worthy to partake of the bonds and flames of martyrs. We, under the government of the Elector of Saxony, have peace; but the Duke of Bavaria and the Bishop of Treves persecute, proscribe, and put to death many."

These fragments are of inestimable value, both as illustrating the progress of the gospel, and as furnishing decisive proofs of the real spirit of the great reformer and his disciples.

CHAPTER XI.

Sacramental Controversy — Carolstadt — Munzer — War of the Peasants—Death of Frederic Elector of Saxony.

While the restored gospel of Christ was making, though amid many difficulties and sufferings, such happy and extensive progress in various parts of Europe, there arose, in the year 1524, among the friends of the reformation, a tedious and fatal controversy respecting the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Luther had rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, but maintained, nevertheless, that along with the elements of bread and wine the material body and blood of Christ were received by the partakers of the Lord's Supper. It is a memorable instance of human imbecility, that a man who had risen superior to the habits and prejudices of education in so many other respects, and who, through the grace of God and the instruction of the written Word, had been more completely emancipated than any mere philosopher in any age had ever been from vulgar and fashionable absurdities, should, in this single point, have remained so unreasonably attached to the error which he had imbibed in his youth. Our astonishment is increased by this circumstance, that he could allow the scriptural expressions to be consistent with the admission of the reality of the elements, according to the plain testimony of our senses, and yet should think that those same expres-

sions do still imply that the partaker of the real bread and wine does also partake at the same time of the material substance of Christ's human body. Thus, however, the advocates for the doctrine of CONSUBSTANTIATION must argue, and the case before us shows that great men are not great in all things; and that it is never wise to adhere implicitly to the authority of mere fallible human beings as teachers.

Carolstadt was, in this point, the open antagonist of Luther, and was, in fact, one of the first persons who brought forward the true doctrine of the sacrament, though he exhibited it in a disadvantageous manner, and defended it in such a spirit as to reflect discredit both on himself and his doctrine.

The previous intemperate conduct of Carolstadt had so lowered his reputation at Wittemberg, that he had found it expedient, if not absolutely necessary, to leave a situation where friendly and confidential intercourse with his former religious connexions was almost at an end. Accordingly he retired to Orlamund a little town of Thuringia in the electorate of Saxony, where, without legitimate appointment, though with the consent of the inhabitants, he became their spiritual pastor. Here he not only promulgated his opinion of the Eucharist, but raised new disturbances by his furious discourses concerning the abolition of images. He appears also to have boasted of being favoured with supernatural communications; and he gave some occasion for his being represented as a partisan of the turbulent fanatic Munzer. The university of Wittemberg summoned him to return back, and discharge in person the ordinary duties enjoined him by the statutes, in their school and church. Carolstadt promised to obey, provided he could obtain the leave of his flock at Orlamund. The elector was so disgusted with the insolent letters which they wrote on this occasion, that he peremptorily commanded both them and their teacher to submit to the legal authority of the university and the chapter. He likewise ordered Luther to visit Orlamund, and inquire into the truth of the various reports, and endeavour to appease the people. The result of his visit was not happy. Probably too much warmth was shown on both sides: and Luther says, "I had good reason to congratulate myself that I had escaped from among them with my life, and was not covered over with stones and dirt. Some of them, as I was

going away, uttered the most horrid imprecations against me, and prayed God that I might break my neck before I should be out of the town."

Carolstadt still continued at Orlamund, till the proceedings of himself and his adherents exhausted the patience both of the elector and his brother; who at length peremptorily expelled him from their territories. He repaired to Strasburg, and thence to Basle; where, without the privity of any persons, except the anabaptists of the place, he procured the printing of several of his pamphlets on the sacrament.

After Carolstadt had been exiled about five months, he appears to have been desirous of a reconciliation with Luther; and for that purpose he wrote a sort of penitential letter to Spalatinus, requesting his interference and good offices. Luther did not hesitate to intercede with the elector to permit Carolstadt to re-enter his dominions, that he might hold a friendly conference with him. The prince, however, caused Luther to be informed, that he did not choose to grant safe-conducts for such purposes; they might, if they pleased, confer together OUT of his dominions; and in so doing he thought they were perhaps more likely to be reconciled.

Carolstadt now wandered from place to place through the upper Germany, and at length made a pause at Rotenburg; where, as usual, he soon raised tumults, and incited the people to pull down the statues and paintings. After the seditious faction of the peasants, with Munzer their ringleader, was effectually suppressed, we find him in the greatest difficulties, and even in danger of his life, from his supposed connexion with the enthusiastic rebels who had spread devastation through Germany. Many persons were seized, and among them even some of the evangelical clergy of Rotenburg, and were dragged to punishment. Carolstadt narrowly escaped. In these circumstances he incessantly entreated both the elector and Luther to be allowed to return into Saxony. He said he could clear himself of having had any concern in the late rebellion: and if he did not, would cheerfully undergo any punishment that could be inflicted upon him. After much importunate entreaty, Luther succeeded in procuring from the Elector JOHN (after Frederic's death) a safe-conduct for the return of Carolstadt,

who was to live in a little country village about a mile from Wittemberg.

He appears to have been recalled about the autumn of 1525, and to have then made a public recantation of what he had advanced on the sacrament; and in the succeeding November we find him transmitting to the elector a written formula for the same purpose, which, he says, was prescribed to him by "the faithful and celebrated divines of Wittemberg."

Whatever doubts may be entertained of the sincerity of Carolstadt in the sacramental controversy, every careful student of ecclesiastical history must acquit Luther of using the smallest degree of duplicity or artifice in that unhappy contest. We may lament his obstinacy, his violence, and his want of candour, of which the proofs are too numerous in the course of his opposition to his antagonists; but still we must discriminate between passion and hypocrisy, between firm conviction and political manœuvre, between that contempt for an ostentatious and intemperate adversary, which is apt to unfit the mind for deliberate investigation, and that intolerable pride of heart which wilfully persists in error, can bear no contradiction, but, rather than not appear to dictate to others, is ready to sacrifice the strongest impressions of reason and religion. It is necessary to insist on these distinctions, for the sake of guarding the reader against the misrepresentations of historians,* who have never seen, or certainly not digested, the authentic original documents upon which the true character of the great Saxon reformer depends. It is reasonable to believe, that nothing but motives the most strictly conscientious could have prevented Luther from adopting the tenet of his sacramentarian opponents. It would have been a new, and in his hands a most powerful weapon against his grand enemies the papists. After some years had elapsed, he says, "I neither can nor will deny, that if Carolstadt, or any one else, could have persuaded me, during the last five years, that in the sacrament there was

* Maclaine, Beausobre, &c. The former of these writers seems to be much influenced by Hospinian, who quotes as of acknowledged authority, because it has found its way into the collection of Luther's works, an account of the reformer's interview with Carolstadt at Orlamund, against which Luther had protested as a "most iniquitous" misrepresentation. —Milner, v. 229, 230.

nothing but mere bread and wine, he would have conferred on me a great obligation. I have examined this matter with the utmost anxiety, and with persevering diligence; I have stretched every nerve with a view to unravel the mystery; for I most clearly saw that the new tenet would give me a great advantage in my contests with the papacy. Moreover, I have had a correspondence on this subject with two persons much more acute than Carolstadt, and not at all disposed to twist words from their natural meaning. But the text in the gospel is so strong and unequivocal that I have found myself compelled to submit to its decision." He adds, "Further, in the affair of pulling down images, I could easily pass by his excesses, provided the matter ended there, for I suppose that I have already done more by my writings towards the destruction of image-worship, than his intemperate proceedings will ever be able to effect. But the mischief consists in this; he teaches the people, THAT UNLESS THEY DO THESE THINGS THEY ARE NOT CHRISTIANS. This is a language not to be borne."* Carolstadt eventually retired into Switzerland, where he exercised the pastoral office for ten years at Basle, and died in the year 1531. It would be naturally gratifying to Carolstadt to find his doctrine concerning the sacrament supported by such men as Zwingle, Œcolampadius, and Bucer; and it would be as natural that they who agreed with him on this disputed subject should view him more favourably than those who were committed against him upon it had done. But besides this, there is reason to hope and believe that Carolstadt profited by adversity, and became more truly Christian in his temper during the latter part of his life.†

But, besides the sacramental controversy, other distressing events occurred at this time. Thomas Munzer and his fanatical associates have already been mentioned. The absurd and wicked proceedings of such men would find no place in a history of the church of Christ, were it not that, by their delusive arguments and turbulent actions, they frequently become an occasion of trying the wisdom and sound-

* Our own times furnish fresh proof how naturally the authors of supposed *discoveries* in religion fall into this spirit. Our nostrums, in *our* view of their importance, quite eclipse "the common salvation."—J. S.

† Milner, v. 69, 235, 236.

ness of professing Christians: and so, in the event, they prove a snare to the proud, the ignorant, and unstable; while they exercise the patience of the humble, and increase the understanding of the wise.

Never did the solidity of our reformer's judgment and the purity of his motives appear more striking than in all that related to these persons. We have seen the wise advice which he gave to Melancthon. He also exhorted his friend Amsdorf not to be anxious about them. Scripture, he said, would be his infallible guide, provided he and his associates were not too much in a hurry, and would but "try the spirits, whether they were from God."

Munzer would not be induced to come to Wittemberg, but remained at Alsted, a town on the confines of Thuringia. There he inveighed against both the pope and Luther. "The doctrine of the latter," he said, "was not sufficiently spiritual: it was indeed altogether carnal. Divines should exert their utmost endeavours to acquire a spirit of prophecy, otherwise their knowledge of divinity would not be of any worth."* They should leave the crowd, and think continually of God, and demand a sign from him by which they may know certainly that he has a regard for them, and that Christ died for them. If the sign does not appear at the moment, they should persevere, and be instant in prayer; and even expostulate with God, as though he did not keep his promises made in Scripture. An angry expostulation of this sort, he said, demonstrated the fervour of the soul, and was highly pleasing to God; and would not fail in the end to produce some very conspicuous and satisfactory declaration of the Divine will. By degrees Munzer conciliated to himself a number of the inhabitants of Alsted, who entered into a conspiracy with him, subscribed their names and took a solemn oath, for the express purpose of murdering all wicked persons, appointing new princes and magistrates, and organizing the world afresh; and upon such a plan that pious and good people only should have the upper-hand. The enthusiast declared that for all this he had the positive command of God.

Mildness and moderation were essential parts of the character of Frederic the Wise; and therefore we are not

* Are we not again reminded of our own times?—J. S.

to wonder that so long as the proceedings of this wicked incendiary were confined to the interpretation of dreams and supposed revelations from God, he should have so far tolerated his extravagant pretensions as not to drive him into exile. But as soon as his seditious designs became sufficiently plain, he judged it necessary to give directions for his removal from the electorate. Munzer then retired to Nuremberg; but was quickly expelled by the inhabitants. Thence he proceeded to Mulhausen, where he had more success. He became the minister of the common people, and stimulated them to degrade the old magistrates and elect new ones; to turn the monks out of doors, and to seize their houses and property. The very best and richest house fell to the share of Munzer himself, who was now become both the first ecclesiastic and first magistrate of the place. He decided all points in a summary way by the Bible or by inspiration, and taught the doctrine of perfect equality and a community of goods. The poor ceased to labour, and supplied their wants from the rich by force. The number of this deluded rabble increased in a most astonishing manner; their infatuated leader became every day more insolent, and persuaded himself that the time for carrying his detestable designs into execution was fast advancing.

Luther at first promoted the elector's spirit of patient forbearance towards Munzer. "Your highness," said he, "had better bear with him till he be more ripe. There is a great deal in him which has not yet shown itself." Afterward, however, he became dissatisfied with the elector's dilatory indecision respecting the whole business of the prophets; and at length, when Munzer, while he yet remained in the electorate, had unfolded his wicked purposes so as to leave no room for doubt, he presented to the elector and his brother a very spirited and elaborate address on the danger with which the country was threatened from this fanatical rebel and his deluded associates. He begins like an apostle. "Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." He observes, "It is Satan's method to attempt to crush every revival of the Divine Word, first by force, and if that does not succeed, then by false spirits, by artful and mischievous teachers. It was so in the first ages of the gospel: and it is so at this time. It is my singular satis-

faction," he proceeds, "to find that these madmen openly boast that they do not belong to *us;* and that they have neither learned nor received any thing from us, but have been conversing with God for the space of three years. They reckon little of our teaching faith, charity, and the Cross. 'You must hear,' say they, 'the voice of God itself.' And if Scripture be appealed to, they instantly cry, 'Babel, Babel, Babel!' They have such a degree of pride and positiveness as I never heard or read of in my life. My reason for addressing your highnesses at present is this: These enthusiasts hold it right to propagate their doctrines by force. They made no secret of this at Wittemberg: and their declaration sank deep into my mind. I saw plainly that they intended to overturn the existing governments, though Christ expressly told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. I do therefore most seriously entreat your highnesses to employ that authority which God has given you, in preventing the schemes of these seditious persons, who would turn every thing upside down. It is not my wish that any persons, not even these fanatics, should be hindered from preaching. Let them have free liberty to exhibit the best specimen they can of their erudition. Let them teach, but keep their hands from violence:* or if they will persist in their ferocious, seditious practices, it will then be your duty to restrain them, and without hesitation to banish them from your dominions. I humbly implore your highnesses to resist these madmen effectually. Let the sacred Scriptures have the pre-eminence; and let us, like true Christians, have recourse to no other arms. But let every door and window be shut against sedition and the occasions of it." Luther, as we have already observed, never did things by halves. As soon therefore as he heard of Munzer's approach to Mulhausen, where he was known to have partisans, he gravely admonished the magistrates of the town not to receive him among them; "for he meditated nothing but robbery and murder, and other acts of violence."

The situation of Germany at this period was very alarming, and it soon became for a time very calamitous. The several princes and states were at variance respecting the

* A striking instance of Luther's tolerant principles.—J. S.

grand tenets of the whole papal system; intestine divisions had arisen among the reformers themselves, concerning the nature of the Eucharist; and multitudes of licentious fanatics of the anabaptist class, rendered outrageous and cruel by the harangues of Munzer and other incendiaries, acting upon the oppressed and seditious boors, or peasantry of the country, stimulated them to deeds of violence and blood.

Accordingly, in the former part of the year 1525, prodigious multitudes of these persons suddenly arose in different parts of Germany, took arms against their lawful governors, and were guilty of the most horrid and barbarous actions. The causes of "the rustic war," or war of the peasants were purely secular, and are to be sought in the proper historians. These peasants were in a state of villanage; many of them had long groaned under heavy burdens; and in their public manifestoes they declared that they intended nothing further than to obtain a relaxation of the severity of their chiefs, and a greater portion of civil liberty. But the enthusiast Munzer availed himself of this state of things, put himself at the head of the discontented rabble, inflamed their passions by his violent and delusive harangues, and by his relation of visions and inspirations, and a pretended foresight of certain success, rendered them altogether desperate and outrageous.

In this turbulent and extensive agitation of the lower orders of the people, it was probable enough that SOME who professed themselves favourers of Lutheranism would ignorantly or perversely misconstrue the reformer's doctrine of Christian liberty, and in that dangerous persuasion flock to the standard of the rebels: but the papal adversaries of the reformation have by no means been content with this concession, or even with exaggerating the effects of this abuse of the Protestant faith; they have affected to impute the WHOLE mischief to Luther and his disciples; and in spite of the clearest and most positive contrary evidences, have continued to represent the licentious and detestable faction of Munzer as originating in that reformer's tenets and instructions, and deriving its strength and numbers from the prevalence of the novel ecclesiastical system. On this account it becomes the more necessary to examine the facts of the case.

As soon as Luther found that all his labours in warning and instructing the princes, magistrates, and people did not

avail to repress the rising spirit of tumult and rebellion, but that the tempest appeared to thicken and portend a dreadful crisis, he determined, without the loss of one moment of time, to address his countrymen of all ranks and orders in language still more explicit and decisive than any which he had hitherto used. The style of his publication addressed to the COMMON PEOPLE is of this kind: "Let every one beware of sedition, as a very heinous crime; and this, not only in what relates to external actions, but even to words and secret thoughts. I might augur well of your professing yourselves ready to yield to the precepts of Scripture, but that I observe your boasts of a regard for pure evangelical faith and practice are absolutely without foundation. Not one of your propositions has the least relation to any part of the gospel; they all tend to promote a merely secular freedom: whereas the gospel does not treat of these subjects, but describes our passage through this world as attended with afflictions, and as calling for patience, contempt of riches, and even of life itself. What then have ye to do with the gospel, except that ye use it as a pretext to cover your unchristian purposes? I allow that those rulers who oppress their subjects in various ways, and particularly in excluding the preaching of the gospel among them, are without excuse: nevertheless it is at the peril of the loss of both your souls and bodies, if ye do not preserve a good conscience in this matter. Satan at this time has raised up a number of seditious, sanguinary teachers; therefore I entreat you not to believe every thing you hear. Ye call yourselves Christians, and profess to be obedient to the laws of God: but your actions make it very plain to me that your profession of obedience to the law of God is a pretence. St. Paul commands all men, without exception, to obey the magistrate; whereas ye would snatch the sword from him, and resist the power which is ordained of God. I admit that magistrates do many unreasonable and many wicked things. Some of YOUR requisitions also are extremely unreasonable and unscriptural: but were they in all respects perfectly unexceptionable, yet this wicked endeavour to extort them by force of arms will, I tell you, if persevered in, bring down upon you the heavy wrath of God both in this world and the next. The Divine rule is express: you must never go beyond PETITION and REPRESENTATION."

He then turns to the princes and nobility, and addresses them with the zeal and authority of an apostle. "It is to you, rulers, and you only, especially the rulers of the church, that the present disturbances are to be ascribed. The bishops, to this very moment, even against their better knowledge, persecute the gospel; and the civil magistrates think of nothing but draining the wretched poor, to satisfy their own pride and luxury. I have repeatedly warned you of the dreadful evils that threaten you, but to no purpose. The wrath of God is accumulating over you, and will burst on your heads if ye repent not. These false prophets, and this rebellion of the common people, are proofs of the Divine displeasure. Yourselves are my witnesses that I have always detested sedition, and exhorted the people to obedience, and even to patient submission under your tyrannical government. It is not I, therefore, it is these bloody prophets, who are quite as inimical to me as they are to you, who have been the cause of this rebellion, and who have been seducing the people for more than three years, without any one person, except myself, endeavouring to counteract them. Let me entreat you then, ye princes, not to despise my advice. Do not fear the rebels, but fear God. Our crimes are such as ought to alarm us; and if God should purpose to deal with us according to our deserts, we cannot escape His vengeance, however small the number of the rebels should prove. Great moderation is the line of conduct which ye ought to pursue at the present crisis. Lenity and clemency can do no harm, and may prevent matters from being pushed to extremities; in one word, may prevent a conflagration which might consume all Germany. It is very true, that the demands of the malecontents originate in interested motives; nevertheless some of them are so reasonable that you ought to be ashamed of having reduced your subjects to the necessity of making them. Even their iniquitous demands will not justify you in refusing them substantial justice. In truth, the oppression of the poor peasants of this country is become intolerable: the numerous and heavy imposts cramp their industry, and there is but one way left of meliorating their condition; the higher orders must restrain their excessive luxury and extravagance, which is the true cause of the evil." In fine, he exhorted both parties not to think of deciding their dispute by arms, for both

sides had a bad cause to defend. He earnestly advised that all the disputable points should be settled by impartial arbitrators chosen on both sides: "Let the rulers and nobles concede something of their strict rights, and let the common people in their turn be more moderate in their demands, and listen to the voice of reason; otherwise this civil war must prove the ruin of the country."

But these Christian exhortations proved ineffectual. The civil war not only continued, but soon became bloody and destructive. In Suabia, Franconia, and Alsace the fanatical insurgents pulled down monasteries, castles, and houses, and murdered the nobles and dignitaries, and were guilty of multiplied acts of treason and barbarity. The moment Luther became acquainted with these abominable excesses, he deemed it the duty of a sound Christian to support the lawful government of his country with all his might, in an emergency which threatened universal anarchy and devastation. Accordingly he changed his language, wrote a short tract "Against the Robbers and Murderers," and exhorted all ranks and orders to come forward and help, as they would to extinguish a general conflagration. "The wicked parricides," he said, "must be crushed. They had scandalously broken their oaths, plundered the right owners of their possessions, and committed treason in various ways; and, what very much increased their guilt, they endeavoured to cloak their shameful practices under the name and character of pure Christianity. There could not be greater pests of society. Those indeed among them who had been compelled to join the faction by threats were to be treated with lenity, but those only who repented and surrendered themselves ought to be pardoned. The rest merited the utmost rigour." This publication of Luther was blamed by many as too harsh and violent. But the author in reply defended his positions with great spirit and ability.*

To relate all the particulars of this rebellion would be foreign to our purpose; it may be sufficient to add, that the princes of the empire found it absolutely necessary to unite

* "The conduct of Luther at this trying moment was unexceptionable; he condemned altogether the insurgents, and earnestly exhorted their lords to humanity and forbearance."—*Sir J. Macintosh*, 1831.—J. S.

their forces and their efforts for the suppression and punishment of the insurgents. The carnage in various parts of Germany was dreadful. A vast multitude of the faction in Thuringia were met by the Saxon and other confederate princes near Mulhausen, where they were defeated in a pitched battle, and Munzer their ringleader was taken and put to death.

This unhappy war is supposed to have cost Germany the lives of more than fifty thousand men. By far the greatest tragedies were exhibited in the POPISH part of Germany, especially where the progress of the gospel had been most obstructed: while in the electorate of Saxony greater mildness and moderation were shown than elsewhere, as well by the rebels during the commotions, as by the government in their measures to suppress them.

The good Elector of Saxony departed this life on the 5th of May, 1525, about ten days before the defeat of Munzer, the leader of the rustic insurgents. He was too feeble in body, and too deeply concerned in mind, to make any attempt at joining the confederate princes. Only three days before his death he exhorted, by letter, his brother John, who succeeded him in the electorate, to do his utmost to compose the disturbances, by choosing arbitrators who were good men and favourites of the people; to avoid the spilling of blood; to pardon the multitude, and to punish only the ringleaders of the rebellion. The delusion, he said, would not last long. God, who had hitherto protected their country, would continue to protect it. This was the last time he should be able to write to him, but he trusted they should meet again in a better world.—The mind of this conscientious prince appears to have been strongly impressed with a belief that the primary cause of the rebellion of the peasants was the just judgment of God on account of the obstruction which the preaching of the pure gospel had met with: and, as a secondary cause, he lamented, that not only the ruling clergy, but also the civil governors, oppressed their poor subjects in a variety of ways. Unable now to direct his pen, he dictated, on the day before his death, a letter to his brother John, in which these pious and compassionate feelings are depicted in the most lively colours. Spalatinus informs us, that a short time before he expired

he addressed his servants and domestics in the following terms: "I entreat you, my dearest children, in the name of God, and for His sake, to forgive me if I have offended any of you in word or deed; and I further entreat you to make in my name this same request for me to others. We princes are apt to treat our poor distressed subjects in a vexatious and unjustifiable manner." The devout and affectionate expressions of the elector drew tears from Spalatinus and all his domestics who were present. His last words were, "I cannot say any more."—"Does any thing," said Spalatinus, "lie heavy on your mind?" He answered, "No; but I have much bodily pain." He expired, however, like one falling asleep. He was in the sixty-third year of his age.

Before the Lutheran controversies, Frederic had been a most industrious collector of relics, and had augmented the number of masses in his church of All Saints to ten thousand annually. How zealous a Roman Catholic he was even in the year 1517 may be collected from certain articles in a will which he made at that time. He there joins with the Holy Trinity, the blessed Virgin, St. Bartholomew the apostle, and then his tutelar angel and all the saints of God, to whose intercession he commits his soul. He particularly enjoins that, for a month after his death, there be said no less than fifty masses every day with a small allowance for each. The Christian reader will be pleased to see how, in the LAST will and testament of this prince, the pure doctrine of the gospel triumphs over the ancient superstition. Not a word is there found of the Virgin Mary, of saints, or apostles, or masses. "I beseech Almighty God," he says, "through the sacred and unexampled merits of his Son, to pardon all my sins and transgressions; neither do I doubt but that by the precious death of my dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I shall obtain forgiveness; and therefore into his all-powerful hands, and to his eternal, immeasurable, unsearchable kindness and compassion, I commit my soul, to be preserved for the enjoyment of a happy immortality. I freely forgive all who have done me any wrong; and I beseech them, in the name of God, and for His sake, to pardon me from the heart, and with a true Christian charity, in whatever I may have offended them; agreeably to what we every day pray for, the mutual forgiveness of trespasses

from God, the Father of compassion."—By the advice of Luther and Melancthon, the deceased elector was buried without pomp and without superstition. The latter made an oration in Latin; and the former preached in German, from 1 Thessalonians, iv. 13–18. His discourse was short, and his praises of the deceased few, modest, and perfectly consistent with truth. On the elector's monument was inscribed an epitaph in Latin, from the elegant pen of Melancthon.

The history of this elector's conduct affords the best interpretation of his principles; and from this it has sufficiently appeared that for a long time he had in secret favoured the progress of Lutheranism. His cautious temper, his superstitious habits, the novel and decisive measures of Luther, and lastly, the intrigues of the pope, the emperor, and the confederate anti-protestant princes, all contributed to make him less active in the support of the reformers than might have been expected from his good understanding and respect for the Word of God. He had however been long convinced how vain it was to look for any efficient accommodation of the ecclesiastical dissensions. The Archbishop of Mentz, in the year 1523, had conceived a plan of this sort; in which it was proposed, that himself, the Bishop of Mersburg, Luther, and the two Dukes of Saxony, or two other princes, should meet at Zerbst or Naumburg, for the purpose of an amicable adjustment. But this, like many other similar projects, came to nothing; and the elector cautioned his brother John against the consequences of undertaking the direction of such heterogeneous assemblies. Moreover, though we have seen that this good prince, in the course of the same year, had reason to apprehend considerable danger both to himself and his electorate, on account of his known attachment to Luther and his disciples, yet the wicked machinations of his interested unprincipled neighbours were quickly confounded; the blessed reformation proceeded most rapidly, and even the temporal affairs of the Elector of Saxony suffered no injury whatever. These lessons were not thrown away on Frederic. He became at last convinced that he had carried his system of connivance and mere toleration quite far enough; that a Divine hand had directed the late revival of pure Christianity; and that it was now his duty to be actively instrumental in pro-

noting the same glorious cause among his own subjects. While meditating deeply, in his last sickness, on these things, and despairing of any useful interference of popes and bishops, he gave directions for an interview with Luther, in the intention of consulting how he should in future more openly support and establish the reformed religion in Saxony. But our reformer was at that time in Thuringia, preaching to the peasants, and endeavouring to appease their rebellious spirit; which prevented him from returning to see the prince till he was on the point of death. Thus was the elector providentially debarred from holding intercourse with a man whom he certainly revered, but whose company, from motives of policy, he had hitherto shunned during a number of years.* There is however great reason to believe that he died in the faith, hope, and humility of the gospel; though it be difficult, or rather impossible, to apologize for his deficiency in the great duty of confessing Christ before all the world.

CHAPTER XII.

Luther's Marriage—His Controversy with Erasmus.

About the latter part of the year 1524, the monastery of Wittemberg was reduced to almost perfect insignificance by the death or desertion of the monks which had taken place in the course of a few years. In the month of October there were left in it only the prior and Luther; and the latter availed himself of that opportunity to resign the title and habit of an Augustinian monk, and in future was called merely doctor or professor Martin Luther. He had long been desirous of taking this step, but well knowing the elector's aversion to innovation, he had delayed to press the point. At last he expressed a wish to Spalatinus that he

* Luther affirms that he never once spoke to Frederic in the whole course of his life, and had seen him only twice!—Seck. i. 27-28, and in Prolog. 23.

might have the prince's final answer, and he promised never more to importune him on the subject. Frederic, with some humour and much good-nature, sent him a piece of cloth, and told him he was at liberty to wear it in whatever shape he pleased. In September, 1525, he writes to Stifelius: "We have resigned the revenues of the monastery to the elector: I live in it as the private master of a family, while God permits."

It has been usual to conceive of the Saxon reformer as rash and impetuous in his conduct; hasty and vehement expressions in his language being mistaken for random indigested decisions of his understanding. We have already had occasion to observe that, practically, few men have been more patient in investigation, or more deliberate in resolution. He was remarkably so in the very delicate and interesting questions which occurred in the earlier part of the reformation, respecting the celibacy of the clergy. The first clergyman who married a wife in Saxony was the curate of Kemberg, named Bartholomew Bernard, in the year 1521. Cardinal Albert, Archbishop of Magdeberg, summoned him to appear at Halle, and requested the elector to enjoin episcopal obedience on his subject. But the cautious Frederic by a dexterous civility protracted the affair, and in the mean time Melancthon composed for the man a learned defence, addressed to the officials of the ecclesiastical court. The tender conscience of Luther appears to have hesitated longer than even Melancthon himself respecting the obligation of voluntary monastic vows. At length from his Patmos issued his admirable tract on this subject, which gave a fatal blow to the whole papal system.* Through the labours of Luther and his Wittemberg coadjutors, the understandings of men were become so much enlightened, and their prejudices abated, that Spalatinus himself entered into the marriage state in the latter part of the year 1525. Luther, however, had set him the example a few months before.

Luther was about forty years old when he married Catharine Bore, a virtuous nun of noble parentage. His enemies exulted on this occasion in the most insulting manner. They represented him as a hardened sensualist, who had

* Supra, p. 145.

no regard even for his own reputation; and his wife as an abandoned harlot. These foolish and wicked accusations are effectually refuted by history, which does abundant justice to the moral character of both the parties.

But several of the very best friends of Luther trembled for the consequences of his marriage. Doctor Schurff said, he would thereby undo all that he had before done. Justus Jonas was so affected with the idea that the reformation would suffer materially by this event, that he burst into tears the first time he saw his friend in the character of a husband. Melancthon also was aware that the reformer's conduct in this instance would probably give rise to much profane and ill-natured censure. "But the taunts and revilings of irreligious men," he said, "were to be disregarded. Luther had done nothing that was reprehensible. He was of a lively, social, generous turn of mind, and by nature itself formed for the married state; no wonder, therefore, that he had given way to his innocent inclinations: for, as to certain slanderous reports which were in circulation, it was well known that the whole was unfounded calumny." Melancthon then adds, "Though even an opinion of some degree of indiscretion in Luther should prevail, it may have its uses, because an exceedingly high reputation is always a very dangerous thing. Even granting him to have fallen into an error, that circumstance does not in the least affect his doctrine. But there is no room for accusation; and I am in possession of the most decisive proofs of his piety and love of God."

Compare these judicious and Christian reflections with the malignant sarcastic credulity of Erasmus, who acquainted the President of the Court of Holland, that "the Lutheran tragedy would end, like the quarrels of princes, in matrimony. A monk has married a nun, and that you may know that this marriage was contracted under happy auspices, the lady was brought to bed about fourteen days after the bridal song had been chanted. Now Luther begins to be more mild, and not to write with his accustomed violence. There is nothing which a wife cannot tame." To another person Erasmus owned afterward, that this scandalous report was without foundation; and added, in his usual jocose and sarcastic style, that, as to the vulgar notion concerning the birth of Antichrist from

the connexion of a monk and a nun, if that were true, the world had at this present time many thousand Antichrists!

But Luther's own observations on his marriage are the most satisfactory, as to his motives and the entire view which he took of the subject. In November, 1524, he declares he had no intention to marry; not that he was either a stone or a log of wood, but because, on account of the reproach of heresy under which he laboured, he expected every day might be his last. In the May succeeding, for the first time, as far as is known, he expressed his resolution to marry Catharine Bore. On the seventeenth of June, he writes to his friend Stifelius, a clergyman: "Pray for me, that God may bless and sanctify to me this new mode of life. Some of our wise ones are exceedingly irritated. They are, however, compelled to own that marriage is a divine ordinance; but the character of me and my Cathèrine* is the bugbear that frightens them out of their senses, and makes them both think and talk profanely. But the Lord lives, and is on my side. He is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do." The marriage had taken place four days before the date of this letter, and he gives several reasons for the haste with which it had been concluded; one of which was, that he might escape "a tumult of vociferous opposition." He adds, "I judged it right to confirm, by my own example, the doctrine I have taught; for I observe many are still pusillanimous, notwithstanding this great light of the gospel which prevails." And again, "It was by no means in the expectation of a long life that I entered into the married state; but, on the contrary, as I may be taken off suddenly, and as my doctrine respecting the lawfulness of the marriage of the clergy may possibly be treated with contempt after my death, I was desirous of showing my weaker brethren that I acted up to my principles." But, even where the fact of Luther's marriage was not censured, his discretion in marrying at such a time has been called in question—when Germany was covered with the slain in the rustic war, and Saxony in tears for the loss of Frederic the Wise. But if censure on these accounts had been anywhere due, one might wonder that it should not have rather fallen on

* One a monk and the other a nun.

Spalatinus, who had lived many years with Frederic, as his domestic chaplain and private secretary. Spalatinus not only actually married his wife a few months after the elector's death, but even solicited that prince's leave, during his last illness, to marry and to leave his court; and it does not appear that he thereby gave any offence to his master, or acted inconsistently with the prevalent maxims of the times.*

Every student of the history of the reformation finds both instruction and amusement in observing the conduct of Erasmus. On his merits as a restorer of learning, though it is scarcely possible to express ourselves too strongly, we need say no more. His well-earned honours in that respect are beyond the reach either of calumny or envy. The purity of his Christian principles, and the integrity and conscientiousness of his motives, are the points called in question. His writings against monks and friars are allowed to have been of considerable service in abating the attachment of mankind to popery; yet a most excellent judge† has not scrupled to affirm, that, through an excessive desire to be applauded for politeness, elegance, and moderation, no man had injured the cause of Luther so much as Erasmus. In fact, Erasmus himself boasts of his services in this respect to the Romish cause, and intimates how ill he had been requited. The real character of this great man may be better known by a judicious selection of a few extracts from his own writings, than from the numerous and contradictory accounts of his enemies and his advocates.

The weak side of Erasmus was his disposition at all times to court the favour of persons of rank and distinction; and it was through their incessant importunities that he was at length prevailed on, though with much reluctance, to enter the lists against Luther. The papal advocates who had hitherto appeared in the controversy had done their own cause no good. The reformers were growing more bold and numerous every day. The ancient hierarchy

* Luther lived twenty years with his wife in the greatest harmony. Melancthon had married more than four years before, in November 1520: but *he* had never been entangled in monastic vows.

† Seckendorff.

was shaken to its very foundations, and it was become sufficiently manifest that neither ecclesiastical menaces nor ecclesiastical punishments could retard the progress of the new doctrines. The wisest and most moderate of the Roman Catholics saw plainly that the church had lost much of its credit with the people in general, and that nothing could materially serve their cause but what tended to regain the public opinion. For the purpose of compassing so important an end, they all, to a man, fixed their eyes on Erasmus. Not very anxious respecting his private sentiments in religion, they were fully convinced of his qualifications for the task they wished him to undertake. An extensive erudition, a perspicuous and eloquent style, and especially an exquisite vein of sarcastic humour marked this celebrated scholar as the proper champion to engage Luther. Accordingly, neither pains nor artifice were spared to secure his services. Princes, and prelates, and cardinals, and even the pope himself were most assiduous in touching those strings the vibrations of which they judged most likely to gratify his pride, stimulate his ambition, or awaken his natural timidity. King Henry VIII. of England is known to have entreated him to commence active hostilities against Luther; and the pope Adrian himself, in two memorable epistles, condescended to act the same suppliant part. The consummate address, artful flatteries, and lavish praises used by the pontiff on this occasion do but little accord with that reputation which some would allow him for simplicity of manners and ignorance of mankind. The Duke George of Saxony, agreeably to that sincerity and openness which were indeed, as well as his violence and bigotry, parts of his character, exhorted Erasmus to take up his pen, and come forward as quickly as possible, to attack Luther openly; or there would be a general outcry against him as one who had neglected his duty, and neither cared for the dignity of the church nor the purity of the gospel. "He ought," the duke said, "to have done this several years ago; when he might very easily have extinguished the little flame which had since increased to an immense conflagration. Whereas the petty skirmishes which he had had with the heretic never looked like serious fighting; and the consequence had been, that many persons considered him as in reality of the same

sentiments with the man whom he treated with so much lenity and forbearance." Erasmus, in his answer to the duke, said, he had hitherto not yielded to his highness's solicitations for two reasons: 1. Both his age and his disposition forbade him to engage in so very dangerous a business. He had really a sort of instinctive aversion to religious controversies. 2. He had considered Luther's doctrine, whatever it might be, as a species of "necessary evil, from which he had hoped that in the present very corrupt state of the church some good might arise. He had never had the smallest connexion with him, but he could not bear that his own moderation should be at last construed into a dishonourable collusion. He therefore at length came forward into the field. Both the King of England and Pope Clement VII. had urged him to take this step."

Erasmus had sent to the pope his paraphrase on the Acts of the Apostles; and at the same time expressed his inviolable attachment to the Roman see, boasting of having refused the most pressing solicitations, even of great princes, to join Luther. Clement, in return, made him most magnificent promises, and gave him two hundred florins; which Erasmus declares he would not have accepted unless the pope had particularly specified that the money was merely an acknowledgment for the book. Cardinal Campeggio also, in three flattering epistles, had requested to have a conference with him at Nuremberg, and afterward sent express messengers to Basle to receive his advice. Nothing could be more grateful to Erasmus than to be thus looked up to by persons in high stations. Princes, he tells us, from all quarters, exhorted him to write against Luther. He sent a trusty servant to England, for the purpose of removing a suspicion, which had been injected into the mind of Henry VIII., that he had assisted Luther in his reply to the king; and he expresses great satisfaction that this step had been attended with much success. His servant was rewarded; his old friends were increased and confirmed in their affections: also Henry and Cardinal Wolsey had even condescended to make their apologies to him. In fact, Henry VIII. had solicited him to take the field against Luther in such strong terms, that early in the year 1523 we find Erasmus declaring he could no longer refuse compliance without absolutely affronting that monarch. Accordingly, in the Sep-

tember of the same year he wrote to the king, "I am meditating something against the novel doctrines, but I dare not publish it till I leave Germany, lest I should fall a victim before I should appear in the contest."

But of all the bigots who importuned Erasmus to commence an attack on the German reformer, none was more violent, or used more acrimonious and unchristian language, than Tonstall, Bishop of London. Luther's treatise on the abolition of the mass seems to have particularly offended this prelate. He asks, "What can the heretic do more, unless he means to abolish Christ himself, as indeed I hear the Divine Virgin is rejected by his followers? By the sufferings and blood of Christ, by the glory which you hope for in heaven, I exhort and conjure you, Erasmus, nay, the church entreats and conjures you, to encounter this many-headed monster! You are now advanced in years, and, I pray, how can you conclude your life better than in driving back into his den, by the sword of the Spirit, this Cerberus, who, by his dismal barking, so insults all the ecclesiastical orders!"

These and similar multiplied and reiterated importunities, to which we may probably add the fear of losing the pension which he received from England, at length determined Erasmus to become an open adversary of the reformers.

In the mean time Luther, though no man that ever lived was less disposed to temporize with his adversaries in essential points, is yet admitted, in the instance of Erasmus, to have exercised extraordinary patience and forbearance. The reason was, Erasmus had been of considerable service in abating the attachment of mankind to popery. Moreover, he was one of the first literary characters in the world, and well deserved the thanks of all who had a relish for classical learning. No wonder, therefore, that Luther, in the great business of the reformation, should have been anxious to prevent so much weight from being placed in the opposite scale. But Erasmus grew every day more and more out of humour with the Lutherans. He had repeatedly declared that the church wanted reformation, but would never run any risk to forward the good cause. Hence the reformers became cold in their regards for him; and he, in return, beheld with pique and jealousy the rapid progress of the new

system. Mutual abuse and accusation was the unavoidable consequence of this state of things. By some Erasmus was libelled as a deserter of the faith, and a parasite, who paid his court to popes, prelates, and cardinals, and who might be hired for a morsel of bread to any purpose. This was enough to raise the indignation of a man who had been accustomed all his life to receive commendations and flatteries. The angry scholar took up his pen to chastise the Lutherans, and ceased to be on good terms with them any longer. "They were men of a seditious turn of mind: some of them neither feared God nor man, insomuch that Luther and Melancthon themselves had judged it necessary to write against them." "In the Lutheran faction," Erasmus said, "there were persons who were actuated by a spirit widely different from that of the gospel. Men who stood prepared for every mischief represented *him* as timid, because he acted conscientiously. Could he but see evangelical fruit, he would soon convince them he was no coward."

For a long time, however, the hostility of Erasmus was confined within the bounds of his epistolary correspondence. But circumstances were every day arising to exasperate the contention, and widen the breach, between him and the reformers. Ulric Hutten, an intemperate admirer of Luther, published an acrimonious invective against Erasmus, which drew from him a little tract, called Spongia, sufficiently censorious and peevish. Hutten had taken the liberty of blaming Erasmus for paying too much regard to the court of Rome. This was a very tender point: and the more provoking, first, because the fact was undeniable; and, secondly, because the Romish faction really disliked him almost as much as they did Luther;* notwithstanding that the ecclesiastical dignitaries gave him good words and fair promises, for the purpose of persuading him to take a decided part against the great Saxon reformer.

The sagacity of Luther pointed out to him distinctly the situation of the mind of Erasmus, thus puzzled and distracted by a contrariety of motives. He viewed him as a man of letters buoyed up with the love of praise and the

* Erasmus represents the divines as hating literature, and as accusing him of heresy.—Ep. 803. He says, he did not much care for the abuse of the Lutherans, but to be pelted on both sides was hard.—*Ib.* 836.

patronage of the great; also as flattered and caressed by popes and prelates, and supposed peculiarly qualified to support a falling church. Moreover, he was aware how Erasmus, by trimming artfully between the two parties, had lost the confidence and friendship of both; and how, in the present state of irritation, he was disposed to do service to the Romanists, and regain their favour. He was sincerely sorry, therefore, that he had been so roughly treated by Hutten, and other advocates of the reformation. As he had long despaired of ever seeing him a decided friend of pure Christianity, so he would gladly have prevented him from becoming an open enemy. Reflecting on these circumstances, and hearing that Erasmus was about to publish some inimical piece, Luther, in the almost forlorn hope of persuading him to peace and silence, determined to make his last effort. For this purpose he composed a memorable letter, quite in his own best style, clear, nervous, and ingenuous, full of life, fire, and spirit, and sent it to his classical adversary. It is a specimen of epistolary writing in perfect contrast to the manner of Erasmus, and must have vexed him not a little. To be told that the "affairs of the reformers were now advanced to such a point that their cause was in no peril, even though Erasmus should attack it with all his might," must have been peculiarly galling to his pride: yet the writer mixed so many handsome and just compliments with his animadversions, that Erasmus was constrained to allow that Martin Luther had written him a letter sufficiently civil, but that, for fear of his calumniators, he did not dare to answer him with equal civility.

But whatever might be the secret inclination of Erasmus, or whatever might have been his wish in other circumstances, he was now too deeply pledged, by numerous declarations and promises, to think of retracting his design of appearing in the field against Luther. He answered Luther therefore briefly to this effect: I cannot admit you to have more evangelical sincerity than myself, and I trust I do more to promote the gospel than many who boast of being evangelical. I fear Satan may delude you; at least I doubt the truth of your doctrines; and I would never profess what I do not believe, much less what I have not attained. Besides, I dread the ruin of literature. As yet I have not written a syllable against you: otherwise I might have secured

much applause from the great; but I saw I should injure the gospel. I have only endeavoured to do away the idea that there is a perfect understanding between you and me, and that all your doctrines are to be found in my books. Pains have been taken to instil this sentiment into the minds of the princes, and it is hard even now to convince them that it is not so. Whatever you may write against me gives me no great concern. In a worldly view, nothing could do me more service. But it is my desire to surrender, with a good conscience, my soul to Christ; and I would that all were so affected. You profess yourself ready to give an account of the faith that is in you; why then do you take it amiss that any one, with a view to learn, should undertake to debate some points with you? Perhaps Erasmus, by writing against you, may do more good to the cause of the gospel than some foolish scribblers of your own party, who will not suffer a man to be a quiet spectator of these contentions, the tragical issue of which I do dread.

At length, in the autumn of 1524, this elegant scholar published his dissertation, called Diatribè, on the Freedom of the Will; having first sent a part of the manuscript to Henry VIII., for the approbation of that prince, who always pretended to a considerable degree of theological acumen. Perhaps the author hoped by this flattering attention to induce Henry to engage for the expenses of the publication; as he took care to inform his majesty that no printer at Basle (where he resided) would dare to undertake his or any work which contained a word against Luther; and that therefore he must print the book somewhere else. "We may, however," said he, "write what we please *against the pope*. Such is the present state of Germany!"

In publishing his treatise on Free Will, Erasmus appears to have valued himself very much upon his courage, and to have expected mighty consequences from the publication. "The little book," says he, "is out; and though written with the greatest moderation, it will, if I mistake not, excite most prodigious commotions. Already pamphlets fly at my head." Again: "The die is cast," he says to Henry, "my little book on Free Will is published: a bold deed, believe me, if the situation of Germany at this time be considered: I expect to be pelted; but I will console myself with the

example of your majesty, who has not escaped their outrages." Very much in the same style he expresses himself to Cardinal Wolsey, and adds, "I have not chosen to dedicate this work to any one, lest my calumniators should instantly say that in this business I had been hired to please the great: otherwise I should have inscribed it to you, or the pope."

The reader, whose expectations may have been raised by all this ostentatious parade, will be greatly disappointed on the perusal of the Diatribè of Erasmus. It is evidently the production of a man who has scoured the surface of his question, but by no means penetrated into its substance. The author affects much moderation, and would persuade us that he scarcely undertakes to decide: he pretends only to CONFER OR TO INQUIRE. An experienced disputant however soon perceives, that under a garb of modesty and diffidence, there is in this performance a firm attachment to some degree at least of the Pelagian tenets.* Close reasoning was not the province of Erasmus, and he constantly betrays a consciousness of being out of his element; uses abundance of inconclusive argument, but is nevertheless highly positive.

It was the authority of Erasmus, and not his arguments, which determined Luther to publish an answer to the Diatribè. "I will answer him," says he, "for the sake of those who, with a view to their own glory in opposition to Christ, make a bad use of his authority."† And again, "my dislike of the book is beyond all belief; and it is a pain to me to answer so learned a book,‡ composed by so learned an author."

Luther's reply did not make its appearance till more than a year after the publication of Erasmus. It is entitled, On the Bondage of the Will. That he formed the design of confuting the Diatribè very soon after he had read it appears from his letters to private friends. But afterward we find him interrupted by the affairs of Carolstadt, and resolving to postpone his answer to Erasmus till he should have done with that turbulent reformer. Whoever, therefore,

* Which deny the entire depravity of man and the necessity of divine grace, at least the necessity of it to restore in him the first principle of spiritual life.

† To Hausman.

‡ Jortin conjectures, "so unlearned a book."

peruses the elaborate work De Servo Arbitrio, and reflects on the author's numerous employments, will have no difficulty in accounting for the delay that took place. The work was received with avidity. The booksellers of Wittemberg, Augsburg, and Nuremberg strove who could produce their numerous editions fastest: and in regard to the merits of the composition, it may not be improper to observe, that Luther himself, many years afterward, had so good an opinion of it as to declare, that he could not review any one of his writings with complete satisfaction, unless perhaps his Catechism and his Bondage of the Will. The following address to Erasmus was placed as a sort of preface to this treatise.

"Venerable Erasmus, everybody wonders that Luther, contrary to his usual practice and the general expectation, should have been so long in replying to your Diatribe. How is it, say they, that a man, who hitherto has appeared rather to seek than to decline public discussions of this sort should at once exhibit so much patience and forbearance? Or is fear the cause of his silence? for certainly his enemies triumph. They congratulate Erasmus on having gained a victory; and they ask, with an air of insult, 'What, has this Maccabæus, this sturdy dogmatist, at last found an antagonist against whom he dares not open his mouth?' The palm of genius and eloquence all concede to you; much more therefore I, who am but a perfect barbarian, and have always been conversant in rude scenes. I confess, further, you have broken my spirit, and made me languish before the battle: and this for two reasons: 1. You have managed your opposition to me with such astonishing art and steady moderation, that I find it impossible to be angry with you. 2. By what fate or fortune it has happened I know not, but certainly you have not said one word new on this most important subject. And therefore it may seem superfluous for me now to tread again the same ground which I have so often gone over before; especially as P. Melancthon, in his invincible theological tracts, has trampled upon, and absolutely ground to powder, every argument you have produced. To be plain, your book, in my judgment, suffers so exceedingly on being compared with his,* that I am much grieved

* His Loci Theologici, or "Commonplaces."

for yourself, that you should pollute your most beautiful and ingenious language with such sordid sentiments: and I feel most indignant to see such contemptible materials conveyed in the most precious and ornamental pieces of eloquence. They are like the filth of a dunghill placed in golden dishes. Your extreme backwardness to appear in this contest convinces me that you yourself were aware of this, and that conscience suggested to you, that, whatever might be the force of your eloquence, it would be impossible for you so to disguise your notions that I should not discover their vanity through every false covering. I pretend to no eloquence; but, by the grace of God, I trust I have a little knowledge of the subject; and there you are deficient, notwithstanding your great capacity and extraordinary powers of language. In this business I have been inclined to reason thus: Our side of the question is so fortified by Scripture, that those who can be shaken by the trifling objections of Erasmus, however elegantly expressed, do not deserve that on their account I should write an answer to the Diatribè. Thousands upon thousands of books will do such persons no good. Enough has been done by my friends and myself, for those who take the Spirit for their guide; and, in regard to those who are not led by the Spirit, it is no wonder if they are shaken by every breath of wind. Wherefore I had almost resolved to be silent; not on account of my numerous engagements, nor for the difficulty of the thing, nor yet through the dread of Erasmus and his prodigious eloquence, but most sincerely from the low estimation in which I hold the Diatribè; not to mention, what is so characteristic of Erasmus, your excessive versatility in it throughout. You exceed Ulysses in caution: one while you affirm nothing, at another time you assume an air of positiveness: it is impossible to arrive at any distinct and satisfactory issue with such men; unless indeed one had the art of catching Proteus. However, my faithful brethren in Christ Jesus do now suggest a reason why I ought to answer you; and there is some weight in it. They tell me a reply is, in general, expected from me: they say, Erasmus's authority is not to be despised, and that the faith of several is shaken. Therefore I am disposed to own, at length, that I may have carried my silence too far; that I may have been influenced too much by carnal reasonings, and not have sufficiently kept in mind

that duty by which I am debtor both to the wise and to the unwise. For, though true religion does not rely on merely external means, but, besides him who plants and waters, requires the Spirit to give the increase; yet, because the Spirit is free, and in nowise dependent on our wills, the rule of St. Paul should ever be observed, 'Be instant in season and out of season:' 'We know not at what hour our Lord will come.' Be it so, that there are some who in reading my writings have not as yet been led by the Spirit; be it so, that the Diatribè has gained possession of their minds: what does all this prove, except that their hour may not yet be come? And who knows, my excellent Erasmus, but God may be pleased, through the means of such a poor wretched vessel as myself, to visit *you*? And I do from my heart beseech the Father of mercies, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that the operation of this little book may be such, that I may thereby gain you as a most dear brother to the cause. In conclusion, permit me, my Erasmus, to request you to excuse my defects in eloquence; as, on the other hand, I have to bear with your want of information in this particular instance. God does not bestow all his gifts on one person."

Dr. Milner has gone much at large into the details of this controversy. Our notice of it must be more brief and general: though, as it formed a sort of crisis in the history, and involved questions which are still constantly under discussion, it must not be wholly passed over in silence.

The real *subject* of debate should first be ascertained. This was not mainly—as the title of the principal work on each side might lead us to suppose—the perplexed and thorny question of liberty or necessity—though the discussion would naturally at times run out into that question: it was not any mere abstract speculation; but was regarded and treated by both parties, and especially by Luther, as a highly practical inquiry, directly affecting the very essence of the gospel. It respected, in short, *the actual state of human nature, and the source* and *means of man's salvation.*

Hence the statement of Dr. Milner: "The controversy between these great men is the same which has appeared in various ages of the church, and even in our own times. The doctrine maintained by Luther cannot, I think, be comprehended and expressed in fewer or clearer words than

those of our own church; namely, that, as fallen creatures, 'We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we MAY HAVE A GOOD WILL, and working with us when we have that good will.'* This humiliating sentiment was peculiarly offensive to Erasmus; and so it must ever prove to the pride of every human heart which is not yet brought, through a sense of its unworthiness, to deep contrition and penitence at the cross of the Saviour."† And again: "The dispute between Luther and Erasmus is, in reality, not so much about the nature of human liberty, as the true scriptural doctrine of original sin, and the efficacy of Divine grace. These are properly the fundamental points of discussion; and it is only indirectly, and as it were by consequence, that the nature of the human will becomes an object of inquiry."‡

Luther's own statement is, "Our present inquiry is, not what we can do THROUGH GOD'S HELP, but what is the extent of our NATURAL POWERS, without Divine assistance; and whether we can of ourselves in any measure PREPARE OURSELVES§ for the new creation by the Spirit. To this single point Erasmus ought to have adhered." Luther maintains, "That without the grace of God the human will is inclined to evil, and to evil only."‖ He considers the subject as of vital importance and deeply interesting. "I most exceed-

* Church Art. x. † Milner, v. 274. ‡ *Ibid.* 316.

§ "Man cannot turn and *prepare himself* by his own natural strength and good works," &c.—Church Art. x.

‖ Milner, v. 290, 303. If at any time Luther appears to go beyond the statements here made, let his explanation to Erasmus be attended to. Erasmus makes a threefold exhibition of the doctrine concerning the will, held by those who were opposed to Pelagius: "1. That man can neither begin, carry on, nor finish any thing good without the continual aid of Divine grace: 2. That the will can do evil only, and that Divine grace performs all the good: 3. That free will is an empty name, and is of no avail either before grace or after it." The first of these he styles "moderately probable;" the second, "more objectionable;" and the third, "most objectionable" of all—(Durior—Durissima). On this representation Luther says, "You make three opinions here, when in reality, as far as I am concerned, there is but one. Perhaps I may not have been able to express myself intelligibly to you, either in the German language or in my indifferent Latin; but I call God to witness, that I intended the terms used in the two latter opinions neither to convey nor intimate any sentiment different from what is expressed in the first opinion."—*Ibid.* 278.

ingly commend you," he says to Erasmus, "forasmuch as you are the only one among all my adversaries in this religious cause, who has attempted to handle the real matter in dispute: nor have you fatigued me with extraneous matter about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and such like trifles, about which I have hitherto been hunted on all sides to no purpose. You, and only you, have seen the true hinge upon which all turned, and have aimed your blow at the throat. On this account I can sincerely thank you; for I employ what leisure I have very agreeably on this subject."*

It was "the true hinge" on which the question turned, whether considered as between popery and Protestantism, or between the pride of human nature and the gospel of Christ; for not only must every idea of meriting or preparing ourselves for the grace of Christ by previous works and observances vanish, if we can do nothing acceptable to God till we have received that grace, but, according to the view which we take of man's natural state, must be the estimate we form of what needs to be done for him, both with respect to his justification and his sanctification—the work of "God the Son his Redeemer," and that of "God the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier."

Hence Luther considered the sentiments of Erasmus, who softened down the doctrine of human depravity, and contended for an innate power in man to choose that which is good, and prepare himself for Divine grace, as directly infringing the great doctrine of a free justification. "Erasmus's defence of free will he understood to be, in effect, a struggle to establish in men's characters some degree of merit, be it more or less: and such an attempt, according to Luther's ideas, militated directly against the important doctrine just mentioned. . . . . 'Erasmus owns (says Luther) that he defends free will in order that he may find some place for merits; and he is perpetually expostulating, that where there is no liberty there can be no merit; and where there is no merit there is no room for reward. . . . . Suppose we admit that the advocates of free will allow only exceedingly little to that faculty: they nevertheless make that little the foundation of justification, because they represent the

* Milner, v. 304.

grace of God as obtained by that little. Indeed they have no other method of answering the question, Why does God justify one man and not another? but by having recourse to the different use which they suppose men to make of their free will. . . . . Thus, whatever may be pretended to the contrary, the dignity of merits is maintained and inculcated."*

In short, the great object of all who espouse the side which Erasmus maintained in these controversies appears to be, to find some means of taking man's salvation out of the hands of the sovereign grace of God alone, and referring it to the individual, who in some degree, though it be but "exceedingly little," "maketh himself to differ" from others. Whether it be by denying the "total depravity† of human nature;" or by imagining in one man that improvement of "common grace," given to all, which others do not make; it comes to the same thing. The former notion leaves fallen man something to work with, even in the first instance, for his own recovery; and the latter must presume a disposition to improve grace existing in one man, which does not exist in another. If that disposition itself be ascribed to Divine grace, the point is conceded; for the *first* step is then referred to God. And it must be a *discriminating* grace of God to which it is referred: for the thing to be accounted for is that which is *peculiar to some*; and this can never be explained by what is supposed *common to all*.

Erasmus maintains the commonly prevailing notions upon this subject: Luther, as unequivocally as Calvin himself, ascribes every thing good to the sovereign grace of God.

* Milner, v. 297, 298.

† "The objections of Erasmus at bottom were levelled no doubt at the doctrine of the TOTAL *depravity* of human nature."—Dr. Milner, v. 287. But what is meant by "total depravity?" Some persons seem to suppose it can mean nothing less than that every man is wholly given up to every vice—that nothing respectable or amiable can remain in human society. But no such thing is intended by those who use the language and maintain the sentiment. They intend nothing more by it than that no inclination to what is spiritually good, "good in the sight of God," remains in man unrenewed by Divine grace; that he is "of his own nature inclined unto evil," and has no "good will" till the grace of God "prevents," or first visits, "him, that he may have" such a will.

We may observe, that in all these discussions *free will* means what our Article styles "a *good* will;" and it might have saved much confusion had that term been adhered to.

"For my part," he says, "I freely own I have not the smallest desire, if the thing could be granted, that my salvation should depend in any degree upon myself; not only because, in contending against many dangers, and difficulties, and evil spirits, I should fail of success, but because, even if there were not these, I should be in a constant state of uncertainty. For, were I to live and labour to eternity, my conscience would never feel sure that I had done *enough* to secure the favour of God. Whatever I did, there would always be this scruple left, 'Is this enough, or does not God require something more?' All self-righteous persons know this to be their case; and I also, to my great loss, have sufficiently experienced the same for many years."*

The next point to be considered is, in what manner the different sides of the question are sustained by their respective advocates: and of this we can give but a very slight specimen.

Setting aside scholastic distinctions and more refined metaphysical reasonings, Erasmus's two grand arguments appear to be, 1. That if man be not equally capable of choosing good or evil, his responsibility is destroyed: and, 2. That Scripture continually calls him to choose between the two. To the first of these arguments Luther's answer is of the following kind: That the bias on the will of fallen man is not that of external constraint, but of inward inclination: he is "of his own nature *inclined* unto evil;" which inclination will effectually prevent his choosing good, till it is changed by Divine grace.—And here he has some explanatory remarks on the only *necessity* which impels the sinner, that may deserve to be inserted. "Nevertheless," he says, "I wish we had a better word than *necessity*, which is commonly made use of in this dispute. For it conveys to the understanding the idea of *constraint*, which is totally contrary to the act of choosing. In fact there is no constraint either on the divine or the human will: in both cases the will does what it does, whether good or bad, simply and as at perfect liberty..... A man who has not the Spirit of God does evil willingly and spontaneously. He is not violently impelled against his will, as the

* Milner, v. 300, 301.

thief to the gallows. . . . . Again, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to change the will of a bad man, the new man still acts voluntarily: he is not compelled by the Spirit to determine contrary to his will, but his will itself is changed, and he cannot now do otherwise than love the good, as before he loved the evil."*

To the second argument, that from Scripture, Luther thus answers. The exhortations, "I have set before you this day life and death, therefore choose life;" "Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you;" with numerous admonitions, promises, and threatenings to the like purport, "prove nothing," he says, "as to the human *powers of performance;* but are merely imperative as to *our duties*," or what would be right for us to do: for, if they prove any thing in regard to our *powers*, they prove too much. They would prove that our wills, without the assistance of God's grace, are in a condition to keep all the Divine commandments"—for all are urged upon us in the same way: "but that we are in such a condition Erasmus will not maintain." The use of these scriptural directions and admonitions, he contends therefore, is, "to teach man, who is naturally proud and blind, the nature of his disease;" to show him his weakness and depravity, and what he needs to have done for him; that he may rely only on the help of God's grace, and may call upon God "to work all his works in him."†

Such are Luther's *answers* to Erasmus's principal arguments—his solution of the difficulties with which his opponent attempts to embarrass him. His direct *proofs* of his own doctrine are all those testimonies of Scripture which teach the utter helplessness and depravity of man, who is "dead in trespasses and sins;" which declare that "without Christ he can do nothing;" which speak of God as "quickening us who were dead;" as promising "to give us a new heart, and to create a right spirit within us;" and as "working in us both *to will* and *to do*, of his good pleasure."

And here he appeals to the experience and to the prayers of all good men, even such as held a different language in their speculations and controversies. "I can easily show you," he says, "that those very holy men whom you boast of as free-willers always in their prayers to God totally laid

* Milner, v. 280, 281. † *Ibid.* v. 282, 283.

aside every idea of free will, and had recourse to nothing but grace, pure grace." He instances Augustine and Bernard; and adds, "Nevertheless, I grant that these holy men themselves would sometimes, during their disputes, hold a different language concerning the nature of free will..... In affection and practice they are different from what they were in disputation and argument."*

Luther's observations on the *difficulties* connected with these subjects are at once wise and devout. "The origin of evil he does not attempt to explain;" and Dr. Milner remarks, "If Erasmus had seen the difficulties on that head as clearly as Luther did, and had been as candid in owning them, these controversialists would have found themselves much more nearly agreed."†

"The system of Erasmus," Luther says, "proceeds upon the principle of allowing some little to the powers of fallen man; and I believe his intention to be good; as he thereby hopes to remove some difficulties and inconveniences, and to reconcile certain apparently contradictory passages in Scripture. But the system entirely fails in its object; for, unless you ascribe a perfect and complete ability to the human will, as the Pelagians do, the appearance of several contradictions in Scripture, and also all the difficulties which are raised respecting reward and merit, and the mercy and justice of God, remain in full force, notwithstanding this petty allowance of power to the wills of men. We must therefore go the full length of denying to fallen creatures the existence of any power to do good works without the grace of God: on this plan we shall find no contradictions in the sacred pages; and, if there should remain some difficulties in consequence of ascribing all events to God, we shall still know precisely what the difficulties are, and modestly submit to be ignorant of what we cannot understand."‡

Again: "But you cannot comprehend how a just God can condemn those who are born in sin, and cannot help themselves, but must by a necessity of their natural constitution, continue in sin, and remain children of wrath. The answer is, God is incomprehensible throughout; and therefore his justice as well as his other attributes must be incom-

* Milner, v. 276. † *Ibid.* 281. ‡ *Ibid.* 292, 293.

prehensible. It is on this very gound that St. Paul exclaims, 'O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Now his judgments would not be past finding out if we could always perceive them to be just. Does not common sense compel us to own, that human wisdom, knowledge, strength, and power dwindle as it were into nothing, when compared with the corresponding attributes of God? What folly and perverseness, then, to dispute the point with him respecting his justice and judgment, and arrogantly to rejudge his decisions! What! shall we submit to the Divine Majesty in all matters but one, and call his fidelity in question in the attribute of justice, even when he has absolutely promised that the time shall come when he will reveal his glory in such a manner that all may see clearly, and be completely satisfied that he is, and always has been, just and holy in all his ways? Again: The divine administration of the world does not please you. You suspect God to be unjust, or you are tempted to think there is no God. The wicked in many instances thrive, and the good are unsuccessful. This consideration very much afflicted Job, David, Jeremiah, Asaph, and others. Yet this great difficulty, perfectly insurmountable by nature and reason, gives way at once to a single ray of evangelical light, which teaches us that there is a future life, in which the wicked shall be punished, and the righteous rewarded.—Then I reason thus: If the light of the gospel, by a single word with faith, has so very easily resolved a difficulty which had proved distressing to thinking men in all ages, how clear will every thing be when faith and the written word shall be no more, and the Divine Majesty itself shall be revealed? Do not you think that the brightness of the glory of God may very easily resolve a doubt which could not be resolved by the light of revelation, when you have an instance of the light of revelation clearing up a difficulty insuperable by the light of nature? Observe; the common distinction is a good one: there are three lights—one of nature, another of grace, and a third of glory. *The light of nature* cannot explain why a good man should suffer, and a bad man should flourish; but the light of grace solves the difficulty. Then, *the light of grace* does not inform us why God should punish an ungodly man, who

cannot by any powers of his own amend his disposition. Nay, I will own that both the light of nature and of grace incline us to excuse the poor wretched man, and to think hardly of God, as unjust in his judgments; especially as he gives a crown of glory to another, who by nature is quite as ungodly, and perhaps more so. But remember, that *the light of glory* teaches us a different thing; namely, that the ways of God, which are incomprehensible at present, will at the last day appear most manifestly to be strictly just, and holy, in the very highest degree." "The best of men are content with this account: they pretend not to explain all the difficulties which arise on this subject: they rather repress the risings of pride and discontent, and exercise the graces of humility."*

Luther concludes his work with a faithful but not unkind admonition of Erasmus. After commending him (as already recited) for choosing a subject which went to the very bottom of the questions in debate, he proceeds: "At the same time I must say that, unless you could treat your subject in a different manner from what you have done in your Diatribe, I most earnestly wish you had confined yourself to your own peculiar gift, by which you have already done so much good, and gained so much applause: I mean, that you should continue to cultivate, and improve, and adorn polite literature. In this you have been of use to myself; and therefore, while I look up to you with wonder and veneration, I own myself under considerable personal obligation to you. But it has not pleased God to qualify you for the great business we have in hand. I entreat you not to suppose this to be an effusion of pride. I pray that the time may be near when the Lord shall make you as much superior to me in this concern of the reformation as you are already in every thing else. However, it is no new thing if God should teach Moses by Jethro, or Paul by Ananias. You say you have missed your aim, if you have Christ yet to learn; and I do suspect you begin to think that this may possibly be the case. You are but a man; and it is not very unlikely that after all you may not have rightly apprehended the Scriptures and the Fathers, to which you think you have trusted as sure guides. Your own very doubtful

* Milner, v. 301–303, 282.

way of speaking leads me to think so. You say, 'You assert nothing, but only discourse and argue.' A man does not express himself so who has got hold of his subject rightly, and understands it to the bottom. In this book of mine, I do not merely discourse or dispute, but I have asserted, and do assert, and I submit to nobody's judgment whatever, but exhort every one to obey the Divine truths which I maintain. May the Lord, whose cause it is, illuminate you, and make you a vessel of honour and glory! Amen."*

We may now, in conclusion, present the reader with some view of the different judgments which have been formed of the competency and the success of the respective parties in this controversy. We have already heard Dr. Milner (than whom no man was a more able judge on such subjects) pronouncing the Diatribè to be "evidently the production of a man who has scoured the surface of his question, but by no means penetrated into its substance." "Beausobre" (whose prejudices he has often occasion to point out), he afterward says, "undertakes to decide, without ceremony, in favour of the very great superiority of Erasmus, compared with Luther, in the articles both of BEAUTY OF STYLE and of SOLIDITY OF JUDGMENT. It is odd, that the historian should make such an assertion, when this very controversy on the will must have been present to his mind. For, though no man, in regard to beauty and elegance of style, will think of pitching Luther against Erasmus in general, yet, in this particular instance, Luther's tract De Servo Arbitrio is abundantly more orderly, perspicuous, and nervous, than any of Erasmus's writings on the same subject; insomuch that Erasmus himself owns it to be a work laboured with the greatest care.† Then, as to the argumentation and general management of the question, whether we think with Luther, or differ from him on the subject-matter in debate, we can scarcely read a page of his treatise without perceiving the hand of a master conscious

* Milner, v. 304, 305.

† In fact, it had imbodied, he said, all that Wittemberg could furnish, whether of learning or of bitterness; and he seriously, though erroneously, believed that Luther had been materially assisted by the elegant pen of Melancthon in composing it.

of his own strength, and at the same time convinced of the weakness of his adversary. In fact, Luther regarded the question concerning the will purely as it related to religious doctrines that were near his heart; and therefore his profound knowledge of the Scriptures gave him a great advantage over Erasmus, who was a very superficial theologian, doubtful in his sentiments, and indeterminate in his expressions. Even in the metaphysical niceties, which could not be entirely avoided in this abstruse inquiry, he proved greatly his overmatch. Erasmus's extensive reading enabled him indeed to be diffuse and scholastic; but Luther was neither to be frightened nor overborne by quotations and authorities. He swept them away quickly, like so many cobwebs; and, by the application of a little plain good sense, pointed out what ought to be the boundaries of every attempt to investigate the nature of human liberty; and lastly, he supported his own sentiments on the question without disguise, mystery, or ostentation."* Again: "The greatest admirers of Erasmus allow that the Diatribè is a feeble and timid production, and unworthy of its author. ..... Even Jortin (his learned biographer) observes, that those who shall carefully peruse the writings of Erasmus on human liberty, will see that he has not the clearest and precisest notions."† The same writer admits, "that Luther's sentiments were at bottom the same with those of Augustine; but that Erasmus was unacquainted with that circumstance, and imagined he was only disputing with Luther, while in reality he was as much opposing Thomas Aquinas and his followers, as the reformer of Wittemberg."‡ "In fact," adds Dr. M., "Erasmus himself was well aware of his unfitness for this business, and in a letter to the Bishop of Rochester (Fisher) owns that he was not on his own ground while writing on the freedom of the will."§

* Milner, v. 278–280. † *Ibid.* 307.

‡ *Ibid.* 335. The following testimony from a writer of Jortin's sentiments is important. "Luther's favourite doctrine was justification by faith, and not by works, moral, legal, or evangelical; but we must do him the justice to observe, that he perpetually inculcated the absolute necessity of good works. According to him, a man is justified only by faith; but he cannot be justified without works; and where those works are not to be found, there is assuredly no true faith."—Life of Erasmus, i. 120.

§ Milner, v. 307.

We add one more passage from the same excellent writer. "The asperity and positiveness of Luther have had the effect of lowering him too much; the politeness and civility of Erasmus have contributed to raise him too high; and it is with no little concern that I am constrained to add, that the propensity of Erasmus's religious sentiments—to make the very best of them—towards the Pelagian or half-Pelagian heresy, secures him but too favourable a reception with many modern divines. The Church of England reprobates Pelagianism expressly;* and therefore such of its members as are disposed to applaud the comments and interpretations of Erasmus and his admirers, would do well to examine whether in so doing they act consistently with their own confessions of faith.†

There can be no doubt that the controversy with Luther was eventually the cause of much pain and vexation to Erasmus. He published a rejoinder to Luther's reply, under the title of "Hyperaspistes," derived from the Greek word for a shield, but which Melancthon says was, according to another meaning of the same word, "absolutely an *asp*." Luther ventured once more to write a conciliatory letter to the man whom he had irritated so much by his answer to the Diatribè; and in his letter confessed the infirmity of a violent temper, which was apt to carry him too far: but in return he received nothing from Erasmus but reproaches.‡ Henceforward he became the irreconcilable enemy of the Lutherans, and lost no opportunity of speaking ill of them.§ He even wrote to the Elector John a letter, which is preserved in the Saxon archives, begging that Luther might be punished, or at least admonished, for some of the charges which he had brought against him;‖ and he seems to have begun yet further to waver in his tolerant principles. "It was a fault," he owned, "to drag men to the fire for *every* error, but it was wrong to contend that *no* heretic ought to be put to death by the civil magistrates."¶ Indeed the whole conduct of this "prince of the literati of the sixteenth century," with respect to religion and the reformation, exhibits an humbling illustration of

* Art. IX. † Milner, v. 353, 354. ‡ *Ibid.* 336.
§ Beausobre. ‖ Milner, v. 311. ¶ *Ibid.* 340.

human weakness and even pettishness. "Had he confined the operation of his ill-humour to Luther only, whose treatment of him was certainly sufficiently provoking to a proud man accustomed to hear little except his own praises, he would have been much more excusable. But what shall we think of such declarations as these?—'I hate these Gospellers; as for many other reasons, so particularly for this, that through them literature declines everywhere, and is on the point of perishing; and without letters what is life? They love money and a wife, and care not a rush for any thing else. We have been stunned long enough with the cry of Gospel, Gospel, Gospel: we want gospel morals.'" "It had been his misfortune," he said again, "not to know a single person who had not been made a worse character by joining the Gospellers." Every person versed in the Scriptures, and in the history of religion in the world, knows what such language means, and what it bespeaks respecting the state of *his* mind who utters it. Nor is it more consistent with other testimonies of Erasmus himself,* than with truth.—"Erasmus had sense enough to see that the church stood in need of reformation: moreover, his satirical wit was of infinite use in exposing the immoralities of the clergy, and in lowering their credit. But he had neither the courage to stand forward himself as a reformer, nor the honesty to join those who ventured their lives in the good cause. As long as the success of these heroes seemed entirely doubtful, he appears to have treated them with considerable candour and respect, and, to do him justice, he always exclaimed against attempts to extirpate them by cruelty and persecution. But when they were become strong and numerous, and could do without his help, his pride was so deeply wounded that he constantly showed himself their determined adversary. Yet, in his opposition to them, he found himself miserably fettered by his former and even his present connexions, and also by many things which, both in his letters and his publications, he had advanced in harmony with the sentiments of the reformers. Hence that timidity, double-dealing, chagrin, and resent-

* "How could Erasmus here forget the numerous encomiums on the virtues and piety of the reformers, which are to be found dispersed through his writings?"—Milner, v. 340.

ment which one laments in the conduct of this great man during the latter part of his life."*

"There is a short epistle of Erasmus, written in January, 1525, to the very learned and excellent reformer Œcolampadius, which throws more light on the real character and the secret motives of the writer than many hundreds of pages from his voluminous publications. Erasmus and Œcolampadius had professed a regard for each other; and the former, it seems, had cautioned the latter not to injure the reputation of Erasmus by representing him as connected with the reformers. Now Œcolampadius, in a preface to his Commentary on Isaiah, happened to use the expression, OUR GREAT ERASMUS. This was a mighty offence; as leading to a suspicion that he and Erasmus were of the same opinion. He tells Œcolampadius plainly, that he would rather have been ILL treated by him, than brought forward in this way as a friend of his party. 'What,' he asks, 'do several great men think of you? the emperor, the pope, Ferdinand, the King of England, the Bishop of Rochester, Cardinal Wolsey, and many others, whose authority it is not safe for me to contemn, neither is it prudent to despise their favour? You know very well there are some who look upon you reformers as heresiarchs and schismatics. Now what will such persons say, upon reading in your preface the words, OUR GREAT ERASMUS? Will not the consequence be, that the dangerous suspicions of powerful princes, or implacable enemies, who had begun to think a little better of me since the publication of my Diatribè, will be all revived?'—The biographer and great admirer of Erasmus was much shocked with this letter. Indeed, we here learn the reason why Erasmus was always so much provoked at the reformers, whenever they intimated that his conduct was influenced by the fear of losing his pensions, or, in general, the patronage of the great. From his own mouth he is convicted of the charge. In secret, he honoured and valued Œcolampadius; but dreaded to be commended by him. And wherefore? Lest he should

* Milner, v. 337, 338, 340. He was "perpetually calling heaven and earth to witness how good a Catholic he was," and at the same time "endeavouring to steer between the dissentients, till nobody believed him, and till he himself would have been puzzled, I conceive, to have written a clear account of his own faith."—Milner, v. 338, 347.

thereby offend those very persons whom he despised in his heart.—What a wretched state of bondage!

"But there is another letter of Erasmus to the same friend which one cannot read without astonishment. 'I never maintained,' says he, 'that the opinion of Œcolampadius on the Eucharist was by far the soundest. It is true, that among some friends I went so far as to say that I could adopt that sentiment, if the authority of the church had approved it; but I added, that I could by no means dissent from the church. By the church I mean the consent of the body of Christian people. What weight the authority of the church may have with others I cannot say; but with me it weighs so much, that I could be of the same opinion with the Arians and Pelagians, if the church had supported their doctrines.

"It is this sort of language, repeatedly made use of, which has induced both many Protestants and many Roman Catholics to consider this eminent scholar either as a skeptic or a dissembler; notwithstanding his reiterated complaints of being calumniated, and his solemn declarations of the soundness of his faith."*

To his friend Richard Pace he thus writes: "If every syllable Luther had written were unexceptionable, it was not my disposition to run the hazard of my life for the sake of truth. It is not every man who has sufficient courage to be a martyr; and I am afraid that, in case of trial or persecution, I should follow Peter's example. I follow the decisions of the pope and the emperor when they are right, which is acting like a religious man; and when they are wrong I submit, which is taking the safe side.—And I am of opinion that even good men may conduct themselves thus, when there is no hope of obtaining redress."† "Here, at once, from his own mouth, is the solution of all the enigmatical conduct of Erasmus. Many sincere and excellent Christians have, I believe, been as timid and irresolute as he was; but their timidity and irresolution were their pain and their burthen. They prayed for grace to help in time of need; they never made light of their infirmities or besetting sins: but, on the contrary, viewed them as the enemies to their spiritual improvement, and struggled to obtain

* Milner, v. 318–320. † Ep. 651.

victory over them, constantly fighting like faithful soldiers of Christ, and diligently avoiding the snares of temptation."

Such are the grounds of the painful judgment which Dr. Milner had felt himself called, at an earlier period of the history, to pronounce concerning the religious character and conduct of Erasmus. "It is an unpleasant circumstance," he says, "belonging to the history of this great man, that the longer he lives the lower he sinks in the estimation of the Christian reader. It is in the beginning of the reformation, while he was exposing the scandalous practices of the indolent, debauched, avaricious clergy, that he appears to the greatest advantage. But when Luther and his associates began to preach boldly the gospel of Christ in its purity, Erasmus instantly shrank; and not only ceased to be a coadjutor of the reformers, but became gradually their peevish and disgusted adversary. With inconceivable address and management, he steadily trod, as long as he could, his favourite middle path of pleasing both sides; but when the contention grew sharp, when the doctrines of grace were found to offend the great and the powerful, and when persecution was at the door, the cautious evasive system was no longer practicable, Erasmus was called upon to decide; and there could be little doubt to which party a character of his stamp would incline. When we divest ourselves of prejudice, and view Erasmus as the most elegant scholar of the age, admired and courted by princes, popes, and dignified ecclesiastics, we are compelled to admit that his temptation to support the established hierarchy was very great; and it is to be lamented that he had not a clearer and more affecting insight into the deceitfulness of the human heart. If he had understood more of men's natural alienation from God by the fall, and had had a deeper practical sense of the evil of sin in his own case, he would have felt weary and heavy-laden; he would have sought more diligently for deliverance from internal guilt and misery; he would have been more disposed to resist temptations of every sort, and particularly those sins that easily beset him; and lastly, though he might still have differed from Luther in subordinate matters or modes of expression, he would have had the same general views of the nature of the redemption by Christ Jesus; and instead of raising captious objections against

the doctrines of grace, and quarrelling with the man whom Providence had ordained to be the instrument of their revival, he would have applied those blessed healing truths to the distresses of his own conscience, and would have rejoiced in that 'burning and shining light' which arose amid the thick darkness of papal ignorance and superstition. In one word, the different sentiments which these great men entertained of the leading doctrines of the gospel were the real cause of their unhappy contention; every circumstance of which may be traced to this single source. And no wonder; for it seems almost impossible that a warm and cordial attachment should long subsist between persons who zealously support contrary notions of the way of eternal salvation. It is true, that where the natural tempers are mild and ingenuous, many causes of irritation might be avoided or suppressed; and it is true also, that where divine grace is powerful, the affections of meekness, kindness, and forbearance will abound and be in vigorous exercise. But, after all that can be said or imagined, there will still be such an essential difference of the spiritual taste, such an opposition of the judgment, and such a dissimilitude in the whole turn of thinking, that separation, not coalescence—dissension, not agreement, is to be looked for under such circumstances. One cannot reflect on these things without much concern. The cause of disunion here pointed at is of very extensive operation in practice, and might be exemplified in many lamentable instances, as well as in the unfriendly strife between Luther and Erasmus."*

We now take leave of this controversy with one more paragraph from the same author. "It has been confidently asserted, that Luther, notwithstanding the high estimation in which he held his treatise on the Bondage of the Will, departed afterward from the sentiments maintained in that treatise, and embraced others less rigid, and less offensive to common sense and the ordinary feelings of mankind. A diligent and careful examination of this matter has convinced me that there is no foundation for this opinion; certainly none in that passage of his Commentary on Genesis, chap. xxvi., which has been produced in proof.—It may,

* Milner, iv. 620, 621.

however, be not improbable, that experience had taught Luther, in the latter part of his life, the expediency of being more careful to guard the pure doctrines of the gospel against the abuses to which they are exposed from 'curious and carnal persons lacking the Spirit of Christ.'"*

CHAPTER XIII.

Luther's Attempts for Conciliation with Henry VIII. and George of Saxony—Progress of the Reformation under the Elector John—The Landgrave of Hesse—Writings of Luther—Sacramental Controversy.

LUTHER was not much in the habit of making concessions. It is however greatly to his praise, that, notwithstanding the violence of his natural temper, there are not wanting in his conduct instances of extraordinary self-government at particular junctures, when the cause of the gospel appeared to him to require moderate and pacific measures. We have seen in the last chapter his attempts to conciliate Erasmus, and secure at least the neutrality of a man whose avowed hostility might impede the progress of the reformation. His treatment of Henry VIII. and of George of Saxony, furnishes examples of the same kind.

In the year 1521 he had published a very rough and churlish reply to Henry's answer to his treatise on the Babylonish Captivity. Erasmus had highly commended the king's book, even before he had read it; but Luther had criticised the several parts of it without ceremony; and in his conclusion had said, "If the liberty I take with the king should offend any person, let him have this answer: 1. I have to do with unfeeling monsters, who have despised all my best and most modest writings, and also my exceedingly humble submissions; and have grown harder in consequence of my moderation. 2. I have abstained from falsehood and from bitterness; whereas the king's book is

* Milner, v. 398.

full of both. 3. It is no such great matter that I should treat with contempt and severity an earthly king, who has blasphemed and profaned the King of heaven by his virulent misrepresentations."

A little experience, however, had convinced Luther that he had done no good by exasperating a tyrant of the cruel and resentful character of Henry VIII. No sooner had the angry monarch read the book than he complained heavily to the Elector Frederic, and to the dukes John his brother and George his uncle, of the proceedings of Luther. "All Germany," he said, "was in the utmost danger from the spreading of Luther's doctrines. Moreover, they ought by no means to allow his false translations of the New Testament to be dispersed among their subjects." The Duke George, as might be expected, joined heartily in the censure; and told Henry that he had punished the bookseller who first imported and sold an impression of Luther's Testament among his subjects. The answer of Frederic was timid and evasive. He pretended ignorance of such subjects; and wished every thing to be referred to a general council.

Nor could it escape Luther, in reflecting on the mischievous consequences of his imprudent provocation of the King of England, that Henry's urgent solicitations of Erasmus to take the field against him ought not to be omitted. What could gratify the enraged controvertist more than to see the adversary who had treated his royal dignity with so little respect defeated and humbled by the supposed invincible pen of Erasmus?

But another reason, more than any that have yet been mentioned, operated powerfully on the mind of Luther, and inclined him to make concessions to King Henry VIII. Christiern, King of Denmark, had taken prodigious pains, both in conversation and by letters, to persuade him that, if he would only condescend to address the English monarch in very modest language, he might be gained over to the cause of pure evangelical truth. Luther owns that he was in a manner inebriated by these large promises, and began to waver. "Who knows," said he, "but in a happy hour I may gain the King of England? Certainly I should incur the Divine displeasure were I to lose any favourable opportunity."

Under the influence of these motives he wrote to Henry

in the most submissive style, confessing that, at the instance of other persons, he had grievously offended his majesty by a foolish and precipitate publication. "He received, however, daily," he said, "such accounts of the king's clemency, that he could not but hope for forgiveness. He had also been told that his majesty was not the real author of the book which had been edited against Luther under the king's name." He takes occasion to call Cardinal Wolsey the pest of the kingdom; and adds, that it rejoiced his heart to hear that his majesty began to favour the gospel, and to be tired of those abandoned sycophants who had disgraced him. "If the king pleased," he added, "he was ready to own his fault publicly; and he trusted that, if he might be allowed to write to the King of England concerning the present state of religion, service would thereby be done to the gospel of Christ and the glory of God." He then entreated his majesty to consider what possible harm a man could do who taught nothing but that we are to be saved by believing in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who suffered for us, and rose again from the dead. This was the fundamental doctrine upon which he erected all the rest; as love to our neighbour, obedience to rulers, and mortification of the body of sin. What harm, he asked, was there in these articles of Christian doctrine? Why was he to be condemned, unheard and unconvicted? His serene majesty saw how many princes, how many states in Germany, and also how many persons of the greatest wisdom, now supported the Lutheran principles; and he wished that it might please Christ, by his distinguishing mercy, to add King Henry to the number, and to separate him from the dominion of the papal tyranny over the souls of men.

In this humiliation of Luther, though the purity of his motives is by no means to be suspected, and though he surrendered not a single iota of the articles of religion for which he had so long contended, yet some, perhaps, might be found among his admirers who thought that he had gone quite far enough, either for the dignity of a leading reformer, or the simplicity of a follower of Christ. With such, even of his sincere friends, Luther could certainly find but little pity, under his disappointment from the failure of his attempt at reconciliation with Henry; while his

avowed adversaries would as certainly triumph in the rebuff he met with from the haughty and indignant monarch.

Henry reproached him with levity and inconstancy. "It was no wonder," he said, "that he had calumniated Wolsey, when, for seven years past, he had spared no dignity, divine or human, civil or ecclesiastic. He had blasphemed the saints, treated the apostles with contempt, and despised the holy Mother of Christ. Cardinal Wolsey was peculiarly dear to him, as one who did great service to the kingdom of England in general, and was distinguished by his constant care in guarding the country from the contagion of the Lutheran heresy." Lastly, he charged Luther with having, at the instigation of the devil, made a sacrilegious and incestuous marriage; in this he had committed an execrable crime; a crime for which, had he been under the old Roman government, the vestal nun whom he had married must have been buried alive, and he himself have been cut to pieces with stripes.

About three months after Luther had made submission to Henry VIII. he resolved to try the effect of a similar step upon the mind of his bitter persecutor, George of Saxony. So early as the year 1523, Count Albert of Mansfeldt, a friend of the reformation, had exhorted Luther to endeavour by milder language to moderate, if possible, the ferocity of the Saxon tyrant; and he had answered to this effect:—"I am ready, provided I do not sacrifice the glory of the gospel, to offer my bounden duty and service, as becomes a Christian, not only to the Duke George, but to all my enemies; and I allow you to promise him, on my part, all the obedience he can desire, if he will but desist from committing outrages against the Word of God. On the other hand, if he be determined to rage in this manner, he may rest assured that nothing can be mentioned to which I am less disposed than to humour his blind, wretched, and furious passions. I could not have thought there had been in the head of this duke so much folly and madness."

In the year 1525, Luther had again been made to believe, as he himself assures us, on the authority of many great and excellent characters, subjects of the Duke George, that he might, by writing to that prince in a spirit of mildness and moderation, certainly induce him in a short time to

become a warm friend instead of a cruel persecutor of the gospel. Accordingly, he wrote to him in substance as follows:—He confessed that, among others, he had treated his highness with some asperity; but that, in the mean time, he had also edited such sermons and various lucubrations of a practical and consolatory stamp, as must prove to a demonstration that he had no malevolence towards any creature, and that the great object of all his labours, contentions, and dangers was to do good to mankind. It was a great grief to him to have been informed that his highness became more and more violent. On that account he had resolved to admonish him in a respectful and affectionate manner: perhaps this was the last letter he should ever write to him. He called to witness God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, as far as his most secret thoughts were known to himself (and God, he remembered, certainly knew them), he was influenced entirely by a sense of duty, and a desire to promote the salvation of his highness. He came, he said, with tears, and laid his very heart at the feet of his highness, and humbly entreated him to be no longer hostile to the doctrine of Luther. For, though the duke did not believe that Luther preached the Word of God, yet he himself was so fully convinced of it, that he was constrained to be deeply concerned for the state of his highness's soul; and to watch and pray for him, and not to be weary of exhorting him, if by any means he might be the instrument of delivering him from the jaws of Satan, and presenting him to Christ. He entreated the duke not to despise him on account of his low rank or meanness. Almighty God, on one occasion, had made use even of the organs of speech of an ass. He said he was perfectly sure that neither his highness nor any power on earth could retard, obstruct, extinguish, or oppress his doctrine. Men might rage against it, but facts had shown that it would flourish, break through all obstacles, extend itself, and acquire stability. The reason was, it was not his doctrine, nor that of any human being. Nevertheless, it gave him great concern to be forced to see a prince of so many excellent endowments making horrid attempts to dash to pieces that perilous rock, Jesus Christ. He prayed God, by his Holy Spirit to impress his highness's mind in such a manner, that this sincere and submissive letter might be an

instance of what Solomon says, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath." He was ready to make every concession to his highness, except the single one of giving up his doctrine. He could not do that without inflicting a deadly wound on his conscience. He begged pardon for having ever used any hasty and improper words respecting him, and he cast himself entirely upon his highness's clemency. On the other hand, he, from his heart, forgave the duke all the injurious treatment he had received from him: and he said, he would earnestly pray our Lord Jesus Christ to pardon his highness's great criminality, in having so much opposed the Word of God that even yet it had found no place in his dominions: nor did he doubt of his prayers being answered, providing his highness did but desist from persecuting the Protestants. In conclusion, Luther intimated that he might be compelled by necessity, if the Duke George persisted in his cruel and tyrannical system of opposition to Christian liberty, to implore the assistance of Almighty God against him; and his highness might then learn, at length, what a sad thing it was to fight against God. As to himself and his despised associates, they had the most entire reliance on the Divine promises.

George was so sensible of the learning, sincerity, sound understanding, and scriptural penetration which appeared in Luther's writings, that he once owned, that some of the reformer's earlier productions had given him considerable satisfaction; and moreover that he had not been displeased with what he had heard from him at the disputations at Leipzig; but had hoped that those discussions might lead to a reform of the existing abuses. With all his bigotry he had likewise retained for three years, as his chaplain at Dresden, Alexius Crosner, who was well known to be not only a proselyte of the reformers, but particularly attached to Luther himself. The situation of Crosner was not enviable: probably it was ensnaring to him; and he fell under the suspicion of using too dexterous management, and withholding a due protest against papal errors and abuses. In the end, however, we must hope he proved faithful, as he was much harassed by the courtiers, and eventually dismissed by the duke. But from Luther, George was now thoroughly alienated: and the virulence of his bigotry and prejudice appears in almost every line of the answer which

he gave to the preceding address. He charges Luther with having made Wittemberg the asylum of all the monks and nuns who had robbed churches and monasteries in his dominions: moreover he then insinuates that the nuns were reduced to a most degraded, wretched, and scandalous situation. The devil, on account of all this mischief, might be a friend to Luther; but the duke could not be so. In regard to Luther's gospel, he said it had been the cause why the holy sacraments, the sacred Mother of God, and all the saints had been blasphemed. These were the genuine fruits of his doctrines. He then proceeds to charge Luther with having revived the old reprobated heresies, and abolished all the venerable modes of worshipping God; and concludes with blackening the disciples of the reformers, in every way that a prejudiced understanding and a virulent imagination could devise.

Luther had too much fire in his composition to bear very patiently the insults and affronts of a German prince, or even of an English monarch. It appears, however, that at first he had determined to take no notice of the falsehoods and revilings of George of Saxony. "All my humble remonstrances," says he, "are lost upon him; nor shall I give him any answer. For why should not I put up with these things—I, who am compelled to bear the furious opposition even of my own Absaloms."* He had likewise resolved upon silence in regard to Henry VIII.; till he found that his own submissive letter, together with the king's answer, had been translated into German, and published with a preface, in which he was represented as having at length openly retracted his religious principles. Luther instantly comprehended the policy of the papal party. He knew they were highly gratified in being allowed to reckon the King of England the avowed champion of their cause. They represented his majesty's letter as replete with good sense and erudition; and they expected that the royal authority would have weight among the German populace. It behooved, therefore, our watchful guardian of the infant reformation to prevent, if possible, the mischievous conse-

* Luther alludes here to the violent and unhappy disputes which he had at that time with other reformers concerning the nature of the Sacrament.

quences of his unsuccessful concessions; and it was with this view that, in the year 1527, he printed, in the German language, "Luther's Answer to the abusive Epistle of the King of England."

In this spirited performance the author bids open defiance, in future, to all the enemies of the pure gospel of Christ; and expresses sorrow that he had ever been induced, in this religious contest, to try the effect of condescensions, civilities, and submissions. "His adversaries were of such a kind that they misconstrued or perverted every thing he did. When he wrote with vehemence and severity, they called him arrogant and contentious: on the contrary, when he was gentle and submissive, it was instantly said, Luther flatters, or he retracts and owns his errors." A radical dislike of the true doctrine, he said, was the bottom of all this misrepresentation. "The arguments of his friends," he observed, "had certainly led him to hope, that by a mild, humble, obsequious conduct he might be the instrument of turning the hearts of several considerable personages; for example, Henry VIII., George of Saxony, and Erasmus: but he had been utterly disappointed in all these instances. In like manner, because he had displayed a spirit of obedience before Cardinal Cajetan, that dignitary immediately concluded he was going to recant. And it was precisely so at Worms, that the more anxiety he showed, and the more pains he took, to conquer prejudice by humility and tameness, the more did the haughty spirits of his adversaries swell with pride and passion, and lift up their crests against him."

He insisted, that he had a public character to sustain; and, on that account, he would not bear in silence to be represented as though he had retracted his doctrines. It was not true. In his most submissive letters, both to Henry VIII. and to George of Saxony, he said, he had expressly guarded against any such injurious construction. He was determined, therefore, in future to regulate his conduct by the following principles. In all matters where the ministry of the Word of God was not concerned, he would not only submit to his superiors, but was ready to beg pardon even of children. As a private man, he merited nothing but eternal destruction at the Divine tribunal: but in regard to the ministry, for which he considered himself

as having a commission from heaven, there was so much dignity in it, that no man, especially no tyrant, should ever find him give way, submit, or flatter. Lastly, he besought his Heavenly Father to enable him to keep his resolution. His profession was to teach the Word of God; and, as no man ought to impose silence in that respect, so there was a necessity that the Word should continually be sounded in men's ears. It was useful for support, for consolation, for rebuke, and for the pulling down of strongholds. "In spite of kings and princes," said Luther, "in spite of the whole world, and of Satan himself, I will never, with God's help, desert my station."

In the latter part of this treatise Luther laments most grievously the unhappy schisms which had taken place concerning the nature of the Eucharist; and he treats some of his opponents on this subject with inexcusable acrimony. Not a syllable, however, escapes him, though then much displeased with the conduct both of his friends and his enemies, which indicates him to have been dispirited or fatigued, much less broken down or worn out by dangers and troubles. He concludes his little treatise with giving thanks to God for the extraordinary prosperity of the church to which he belonged, and for the failure of the disgraceful attempts of his enemies.

We proceed to consider the progress of the reformation under the Elector John.

The new Elector of Saxony conducted the religious concerns of his dominions in a manner quite different from that of his brother and predecessor, Frederic. The latter connived at and tolerated, rather than avowed and established, the alterations introduced by Luther and his associates. But the former no sooner found himself in possession of the sovereign authority than he exercised it with resolution and activity, by forming new ecclesiastical constitutions, modelled on the principles of the great reformer.

The natural dispositions of these two princes, as well as the circumstances in which they were respectively placed, led to this difference of political procedure. The extraordinary prudence and moderation by which Frederic had justly merited the surname of wise constantly induced him to temporize with the pope and his cardinals, and to hope

for the restoration of peace and union among the dissentient parties. Educated, also, under the bondage of papal mystery and papal domination, of his own judgment he scarcely dared to stir a single step from the beaten path of implicit submission. Yet, on the other hand, the pious and tender conscience of this prince prevented him from resisting many of the bold innovations of Luther, though manifestly levelled against the Romish corruptions and superstitions. Add to this, he had a great reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and also a high opinion both of the knowledge and the integrity of the reformer in interpreting them: and hence, in various instances, he not only did not oppose, but encouraged, though with secrecy and reserve, his religious plans and propositions.

Moreover, when Luther first ventured to withstand the pretensions of the Roman hierarchy, the points in dispute were little understood; the contest was full of danger, and it required more than even the foresight of Frederic to be able to predict the issue: whereas the battle was half won when John assumed the reins of government. The minds of men, by study and reflection, and by numerous publications both of the controversial and of the sober didactic kind, were become much enlightened in matters of religion. The spirit of reformation was spreading in all directions; and though it might have been difficult for a prince like Frederic, who for a long time had, in general, been in the habit of sanctioning and enforcing the ordinances of the Romish church, to declare open hostilities against the pope's supremacy, his brother John, now become elector, could feel little embarrassment of this sort. Sound policy, as well as reason and justice, would dictate to the new sovereign the wisdom of making a stand, from the very commencement of his government, against the illegal and exorbitant pretensions of the Roman see.—Happily, this excellent prince was well qualified by nature for the part which he had to act at this critical juncture. For, though the Elector John is nowhere celebrated for his profound skill in the science of politics, yet his moral endowments and steady temper have procured him with posterity the illustrious titles of the GOOD and the CONSTANT. A character of this stamp could not fail to be convinced, that to temporize much longer with a corrupt and unprincipled hierarchy

might prove fatal to the good cause. An appeal had been made to the common sense of mankind, and a decision had been returned which had astonished all Europe. This astonishment was, therefore, to be roused to action, and converted into a bold resistance, at a moment when submissive and palliating methods must inevitably have afforded great advantage to the enemy. The battle, it is true, was *half* won; but then it was not *more* than half won: for, in fact, there still remained, in opposition to Christian truth and liberty, an alarming combination of interested princes and prelates, who were supported by multitudes of their bigoted subjects and adherents, and who meditated no less than the entire annihilation of the infant reformation.

How justly may we admire and adore the goodness and wisdom of Providence in raising up means so suitable for carrying forward and completing its sacred purposes! The zeal and constancy of John, the new Elector of Saxony, was as loudly called for at the present crisis, as the extraordinary prudence and caution of his brother Frederic had ever been found necessary, a few years before, for the personal safety of Luther, and the success of his early endeavours to reform a corrupt ecclesiastical establishment.

We ought not to omit to mention, that John had a most excellent coadjutor in his own son, John Frederic, who, with the two names of his father and his uncle, seems to have possessed the united virtues of both. This prince was only about twenty-two years of age, and he had already given many proofs of a truly pious disposition.

Neither should it be forgotten that even Frederic himself, the deceased elector, had determined, a little before he died, to afford a more open and substantial support to the evangelical preachers in his dominions: and this circumstance, no doubt, was an additional motive to his brother and his nephew to enter on the work of reformation with vigour and despatch.

The university and the collegiate church of Wittemberg soon experienced a salutary renovation. A new order of public worship was provided; other churches began to be modelled after the plan of Wittemberg, and a general visitation was promised of all the churches throughout the electorate of Saxony. John and his son John Frederic showed the utmost readiness to adopt the counsels of Luther; but

that zealous reformer, well aware of the difficulties and delays which his plans might often meet with at court from the privy-counsellors of the prince, did not always wait for their sanction. However, he did not neglect to transmit to the prince, in a respectful manner, the formularies of the new ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies which, with the advice of Melancthon and Bugenhagen, he had drawn up, and which the reformers had actually begun to use at Wittemberg. The sacrament was there administered to the laity, for the first time, in the German, instead of the Latin language, on Sunday, the 29th of October, 1525. The regulation of the public service of the church, and the appointment of well-qualified pastors, was a matter near the heart of the reformer. "I well know," he says, in a letter to Hausman, "how much the parishes stand in need of reform. This is a heavy stone, which I am endeavouring to roll; and I will solicit the prince to lend his assistance. I am convinced that all we do is to no purpose, if regular officiating pastors are not appointed. To this day our own parish is not settled. What must become of the rest? I am overwhelmed with their complaints daily. Satan also is at work. I beg you to visit all the parishes you can. The prince is far from being displeased with our exertions; and I have a great desire to finish this business by one effective effort."

The elector was so far from disapproving the new regulations of Luther that he sent two of his counsellors to confirm them publicly, and to carry the same system to a still greater extent. The reformer himself, however, appears to have been the leading counsellor at this important crisis. He stated in writing, at full length, the situation of the university; how sadly it was on the decline, considered as a seminary of learning and piety; and he entreated the prince to send commissioners to fix the salaries of the professors and lecturers. He explained to him what steps he himself had actually ventured to take, both in regard to the academical lectures and the divine services. He observed, that though he might have been perhaps too troublesome in this business, or have even shown too much distrust of the elector's paternal care, yet he had this excuse to plead, that the fruit of his conduct, however faulty or indefensible it might have been, had proved no less than

the means of preserving the university from instant dissolution. With great seriousness he admonished the elector to make some provision for the poor labouring clergy; and also to amend the proceedings of the ecclesiastical courts. The elector took all this in excellent part; but appears to have been considerably startled at the idea of augmenting the salaries of the clergy out of his own treasury. "That," he said, "would be a matter of great difficulty;" and he asked Luther what he had to propose on the subject. The answer was simply this: "In the general visitation of the whole country, let there be taken an accurate account of all the ancient revenues, and if these be found insufficient for the purpose, then let the suitable payments to the officiating clergy be made from new imposts on the respective towns and parishes, which they may well bear, being now relieved from many popish oppressions." To a similar inquiry concerning the augmentation of the academical salaries, Luther replied, "There is abundance of means for this purpose from the many vacant offices; for the number of the clergy in the collegiate church of All Saints is now reduced from eighty to eighteen. All the rest are either dead or have left their situations."—The most experienced financier could scarcely have returned a better answer to the question.

The due application of the surplus funds of this rich church of Wittemberg had been, for some time past, an object of considerable attention and difficulty. The Elector Frederic, supported by the older members of the chapter, had long resisted the abolition of private masses; and, during the altercations on this point in 1523, he had even threatened the sturdy reformers with the sequestration of the ecclesiastical salaries, unless they continued to observe strictly their ancient institutions. Luther, however, in a matter of great importance, was not to be discouraged by disappointment or opposition. He pressed the late elector afresh on the same subject, with spirit and address; and, as there were then three new canons whose consciences would not permit them to comply with the papal usages, he entreated the prince to allow their stipends to be employed for the advantage of the professors and students of the university. The answer of Frederic was now in all respects gracious and favourable, and afforded a good hope that

Luther's ideas would be adopted. In fact, by connivance, rather than by express directions, that prince had permitted the redundant ecclesiastical wealth to be gradually diverted into the channels above mentioned. This redundant wealth was become very considerable, from the abolition of private masses, and many other Protestant changes. But it is allowed by historians that no part of it was ever applied by Frederic to his own specific emolument.

Such disinterested conduct has rendered his memory truly illustrious; and is a complete refutation of the rash aspersions of those who, either through ignorance or malice, would insinuate that this excellent prince favoured the reformation from motives of avarice, and secret intentions of plundering the opulent ecclesiastics. However, the Elector John, with a more enlightened conscience, and a more magnanimous spirit, not only confirmed what had been barely permitted by his predecessor during the last years of his life, but also gave the revenues of the deserted monasteries for the purpose of maintaining the parochial clergy and the public instructers, both in the churches and the schools. He suffered nothing to come into competition with the reformation as an object of his concern: and, as he was undoubtedly the first prince in Germany who openly both resisted the popish doctrines and discipline, and established the new system of the Wittemberg theologian, he has been justly denominated the SECOND PARENT and founder of the Lutheran church

The laudable efforts of the elector and his son were much encouraged by the friendly dispositions of their neighbour Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse. These dispositions had appeared at a conference which they had had with the Landgrave at Creutzberg, only a few weeks before the death of Frederic; when he had declared that, rather than be a deserter from the Word of God, he would lose his wealth, his dominions, and even his life. Luther, whose active and comprehensive eye was in every corner, writes thus to Spalatinus on this occasion: "I rejoice that the Prince of Hesse has had a conversation with our princes. I hope it will be to the advantage of the gospel."

But the Duke George of Saxony was a lamentable obstacle to any religious association which did not profess, as

the basis of union, implicit obedience to the Roman see: and the opposition of this veteran papist was at any time to be dreaded, not merely on account of his wealth and the number of his subjects, but also for the situation of his provinces, which lay enclosed in the electorate of Saxony. Philip of Hesse was his son-in-law, and was sanguine enough to entertain the hope of gaining the duke to the cause of the gospel, by writing to him a brief exhortation, full of piety and affection. George sternly replied, "That he should commit the cause to God; for that after a hundred years it would appear who was right and who was wrong." This rough answer of his father-in-law was an instructive lesson no doubt, to Philip. The same answer produced reflections in the truly Christian mind of the young prince John Frederic, which deserve to be remembered. "I am shocked," said he, "at the sentiments contained in the letter of George; especially at his saying the truth will appear after a hundred years. There is nothing of the nature of *faith* where a man will not believe till he is convinced by experience. I am grieved at the poor prince's situation; for, if he will not believe till after trial has been made, he may defer the important business too long, that is, till there be no room for repentance."

The unhappy George must have suffered considerable mortification on account of the increasing progress of evangelical truth during the year 1525. The magistrates of several of the imperial cities adopted the reformation in form. At Nuremberg there was a public conference, in full senate, and in presence of many of the inhabitants, between Osiander, at the head of several of the evangelical teachers on the one part, and five leading preachers of the papal party on the other; the issue of which was, that there should be no more sermons or ceremonies at the monasteries, and that the monks should no longer be exempted from the usual burdens of the rest of the inhabitants. Hagenau in Alsace received the divine Word from Wolffgang Fabricius Capito, who was a native of the place, and had been called thither from Strasburg to strengthen the hands of the Protestant party. Capito administered the sacrament on Palm Sunday, according to the scriptural method: and on Easter Sunday, without using salt, oil, or any

papistical ceremony, he baptized before a great multitude, who had flocked together to see the novelty, a child of a principal inhabitant, called Wendelinus, by the name of Josiah; the father intimating thereby, that as the book of the law was found in the reign of Josiah, and in consequence the true worship of God restored, so the Holy Bible, which had been in a manner lost during the papacy, was, through the goodness of God, found again at the period of his little Josiah's birth, and the scriptural doctrine of salvation restored to Germany. At Northusa, in Thuringia, the inhabitants met together, read over Luther's early writings on the reformation, conferred on the several points, acknowledged the errors of popery, and determined to establish a purer church. The magistrates seconded the wishes of the people, and appointed the prior of the Augustinian monastery to preach the gospel in St. Peter's church.

Several counties also of the empire were evangelized about the same time; for example, those of Hanau, Altenburg, and Tecklenberg. In the marchionate of Lusatia, the two elegant and rich cities of Gorlitz and Lauban experienced a similar improvement. The clergy of the neighbouring villages assembled in the city of Gorlitz, and there publicly renounced the authority and jurisdiction of their popish diocesan, and at the same time abolished many of the Romish customs and vanities. At Dantzic, one of the most celebrated marts of the north, the progress of the gospel was astonishing. "You may learn," says Luther, "from one of the clergy of Dantzic, who is come here on the express errand of requesting the prince to permit Pomeranus to go among them, how wonderfully Christ is at work in that place. We cannot well spare our brother; yet in so important an evangelical concern, we ought, I think, to give way. Who knows what God may do through his instrumentality? Let us neither obstruct so extraordinary a call, nor pretend to be ignorant of its meaning. If I were called in this manner, I should not dare to refuse; I would go instantly!"

In this brief review of the increase of evangelical light, we must not omit to mention what happened at Frankfort on the Main. The inhabitants, through the instructions of two laborious evangelical preachers, had acquired such an insight into the corruptions and abuses of the papal sys-

tem, that they assembled in a tumultuous manner a little before Easter, and insisted on the abolition of the popish mass and other ceremonies. The senate interfered, and informed the ecclesiastics of the papal party, that if they expected the support and defence of the magistrates, they must confute, by the Word of God, those tenets of the evangelical teachers which maintained that the mass was not a sacrifice. Finding this impossible, the papistical preachers quitted three of the principal churches, which were immediately occupied by the reformers.

The successful labours at Breslau of that eminent divine Doctor Hesse, and of his assistant, Moiban, have already been mentioned. The good cause continued to prosper; most of the towns and cities of Silesia followed the example of their capital; and their excellent bishops, James of Saltza, and Balthazar of Promnitz, are recorded with veneration in the annals of the revival of pure religion, on account of their extraordinary zeal, piety, and prudence.

But this glorious progress of the truth, and fall of Antichrist, did not take place without the shedding of some blood of the martyrs. James Pavan of Bologne, having been seized in the preceding year, on account of his profession of pure Christianity, had recanted through fear of death. In the course of the present year, 1525, he became bold again in the cause of the gospel; he preached openly on the nature of the sacrament; and, agreeably to his own express wish, was burned alive at Paris. He surrendered his life, in the moment of trial, with the utmost cheerfulness. A German, named Wolffgang Schuch, had been appointed pastor of one of the towns of Lorraine, and during his faithful ministry had abolished the mass and the worship of images and idols. His congregation were accused of disloyalty to the Duke of Lorraine. The duke threatened to destroy the town with fire and sword. Schuch judged it his duty to step forward voluntarily, and defend his townsmen, though at the peril of his life. He composed a confession of his faith; and was on the eve of publishing it, when he was suddenly cast into a filthy dungeon, and condemned to the flames. On hearing his sentence, he broke out into the words of the hundred and twenty-second Psalm; and when in the fire itself he sang the fifty-first

Psalm. At Mechlin, in Brabant, one Bernard, a Carmelite friar, is mentioned by Luther as having been burned on account of his open profession of the gospel. And at the Hague, a clergyman named John de Backer scarcely twenty-seven years old, after many long and vexatious examinations by the papistical inquisitors, merited the crown of martyrdom.

Amid his occupation with the new ecclesiastical establishment and regulations, which, under the auspices of the elector and his son, Luther was rapidly introducing into Saxony, he still found time for preaching the Word of God, and for various useful publications. In reflecting on the latter class of his labours, it may in some measure lessen our surprise if we advert to two things, both of which are, beyond dispute—his unparalleled industry, and his vast fund of religious knowledge, the result of long and patient study of the Holy Scriptures. But, in regard to his labours of the former kind, it may be a matter both of curious inquiry and of just admiration how a man who had spent so large a portion of his life in a monastery, and even now was far from being advanced in years, attained such consummate prudence and discretion for the conduct of practical concerns in worldly affairs. Certainly, it is easier to account for his numerous sermons, commentaries, and theological tracts, than for his wise institutions, both in the church and the university, where he had new offices and ranks and orders to arrange, new laws and discipline to digest; where the ecclesiastical and academical revenues were in the utmost confusion—redundant on some accounts, defective on others; and lastly, where the distribution of the whole required fresh inspections and reviews, as well as the most judicious and impartial adjustments. Pious minds, however, who believe that the hearts of men are prepared and directed by a Divine superintending agency, especially on great occasions, will have no very perplexing difficulty here. And, in regard to those who are disposed to explain the course of human events by what are called natural causes, they should, in the first place, recollect distinctly what were the specific endowments of Luther, allowed by all who are well acquainted with his history; namely, a conscientious integrity, incapable of being warped by selfish

and interested considerations; a clear and comprehensive understanding, furnishing an almost instinctive view of the measures to be adopted in the most critical circumstances; a spirited and courageous temper, constantly impelling him to decision and despatch. Then, in the second place, they may be put in mind, that, whatever pains they would take to exclude Almighty God from the government of his own creation, they cannot deny that at the very period when the revealed religion was most deplorably corrupted and defiled by human devices, and when there was the greatest need of a champion to contend with Antichrist, there was actually raised up in Saxony a personage qualified in this uncommon degree to fight manfully under the banner of Christ, and to restore his church to its genuine beauty and simplicity.

Modern philosophers, as they are called, are apt to disregard the statement of such premises as these, merely, it would seem, because they do not relish the inferences to which they unavoidably lead.

In the year 1525 Luther published his valuable exposition of the book of Deuteronomy. The following observations, which he here makes on the interpretation of Scripture, are extremely judicious and valuable.

"Let the Christian reader's first object always be to find out the literal meaning of the Word of God; for this, and this alone, is the whole foundation of faith, and of Christian theology. It is the very substance of Christianity; the only thing which stands its ground in distress and temptation: it is that which overcomes the gates of hell, together with sin and death, and which triumphs to the praise and glory of God. Allegories are often of a doubtful nature, depending on human conjecture and opinion; for which reason Jerome and Origen, and other fathers of the same stamp, nay, I may add, all the old Alexandrian school, should be read with the greatest caution. An excessive esteem for these has gradually introduced a most mischievous taste among later writers; who have gone such lengths as to support the most extravagant absurdities by scriptural expressions. Jerome complains of this practice in his own time, and yet he himself is guilty of it. In our days there are some commentators who, wherever they find in Scripture a word of the feminine gender, understand it to mean the Virgin Mary; and hence, almost all the revealed Word

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is made to treat of the blessed Virgin! Wherefore we ought always to observe St. Paul's rule, and to build upon wood, hay, and stubble, but gold, silver, and precious stones. An allegory should never be made the foundation of any doctrine, but be introduced as a secondary thing, to confirm, to adorn, to enrich a Christian article of faith. Never produce an allegory to support your sentiment; on the contrary, take care that your allegory rest on some just sentiment as a foundation, which by its aptness and similitude it is calculated to illustrate."

No man was ever a more steady and consistent enemy to mysticism than Luther. His concluding admonitions on that subject well deserve our notice, as they contain the substance of God's ordinary method of leading souls to the kingdom of heaven. "Let us," says he, "never desert the pure doctrine of the gospel. We are persuaded that the substance of our religion consists in faith, which is the gift of the Spirit, and comes by hearing the Word of God. A previous and perfect mortification of sin is not required for this purpose; though there must be a previous conviction of sin and of its malignity, to humble and prepare us for the faith of Christ. Then follows the gospel, which gives life and strength; and through that life and strength we must contend against the evil principle which remains in the flesh, and must aim at no less than the obtaining of a perfect victory over it."—"Often the very best Christians suffer through the malignant influence of the flesh, and the treacherous plausibility of works; for they are hereby led with an impetuosity of spirit to aim at external mortification and the performance of external works, rather than to press for faith and the Holy Spirit by importunate applications at the throne of grace, in reliance on the written promises. They act as though faith and the Spirit came by works and mortification, whereas the contrary is the scriptural order of things."

One of Luther's great excellences as a divine is the perspicuous and JUST ORDER in which he constantly places the several doctrines of practical Christianity and their effects. He is, on all occasions, solicitous to show that the Christian life begins with, depends on, and is perfected through the written Word. The law of God humbles men, and is the schoolmaster which teaches them that they can do nothing

in their own strength. Justification and peace of conscience are the gift of the Spirit, through faith in the Redeemer, without any works on our part. Hence we rejoice, and cry, "Abba, Father." There is an end of servile fear, and of flying away from the presence of an angry God. On the contrary, there succeeds a filial access into the grace of our Heavenly Father. This great internal change soon shows itself in external actions. As the heart believes the tongue confesses; and thus the gospel is preached to others, and the kingdom of Christ is augmented. Then come the cross and tribulation, on account of the Word of God; and these explore and strengthen faith, even to the full assurance of hope. The old man is mortified; and the fruits of the new man, which are the proper proof of the existence of faith and the Spirit, increase more and more, and show themselves in the love of our neighbour, and in a universal benignity, and disposition to peace and goodness.

The sermons of Luther were very numerous; but they cannot be particularly noticed here. Most of the writings of Luther, we may remark, were published on the spur of the occasion, and have no pretensions, in general, to the character of correct and finished compositions. The author was attentive to things; and was not only regardless of words, but even accustomed to the use of scholastic barbarisms. Hence Erasmus had conceived him incapable of writing with such a degree of classical purity as appears in his reply to that accomplished scholar.

Luther, a short time before he ventured to administer the Lord's Supper in the German language, had had the precaution to compose and print a very useful little book, containing thirty-eight German hymns, with their appropriate tunes, for the express purpose of conveying, and fixing in the memories of the common people, much religious instruction in a very concise and agreeable manner. He here applied his knowledge of musical numbers and harmonies to the excitation of the most pious and fervid emotions in the soul.

The letters which our reformer, in the exercise of his paternal care, wrote to the several pastors and congregations of the infant evangelical churches are numerous, and many of them replete with excellent matter. Of one of them,

addressed to his Christian brethren at Antwerp, we must take some notice; both because it affords a striking instance of Satan's activity in raising up false teachers, whenever his kingdom is in peculiar danger from remarkable revivals of Christian truth; and because it contains the writer's refutation of the calumny of having represented God as the author of sin; and an illustration of the manner in which he warned men to avoid speculations "too high for them," and kept them to what is practical and useful. The most important parts of it are in substance as follows: "He had been informed," he said, "of the rise of some very dangerous spirits at Antwerp, and he believed it to be his duty to give his Christian brethren a little honest advice. The object of these false teachers," he says, "was to confound and perplex, and to draw men from the light into darkness. One of these teachers came to me; and a more inconsistent, impudent, petulant, lying spirit I never saw, or heard to speak. There is one point which he insisted on with the utmost pertinacity, namely, that God did not permit sin, because such permission could not take place without the will of God; for who could compel the Almighty to permit sin? I have no doubt that the man will falsely accuse me to you, as though I had said that God has absolutely a pleasure in the existence of sin, for its own sake. To which charge I answer, that the representation is injurious and false. What I do maintain is this: That God has forbidden sin by the most express precepts; and that this part of his will is both perfectly clear and also necessary for us to know. But *how* it happens that he should permit men to sin, and that they should consent to the perpetration of sinful actions, he has not thought proper that we should know; otherwise he certainly would have opened these matters to us, had it been his will that we should have been made partakers of his secret counsel. St. Paul himself disapproves of these curious inquiries. 'Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God?'" In conclusion, he exhorts his brethren not to listen to those contentious and troublesome spirits, who would harass their minds with profound speculations concerning the secret will of God. "Is it not enough that the commands of God have no ambiguity? God detests sin. That is sufficient for us; but how sin comes, and why he permits it, these are points

which we should leave with Him. A servant ought not to inquire after his master's secrets, much less to know them: still abundantly less does it become a poor miserable creature to pry into the mysteries of the Divine Majesty, his Creator. See then that ye hold to what is useful and necessary; and avoid futile, trifling, contentious points, that tend nothing to edification. Once more: Avoid every thing that is above your comprehension, and rest in the plain precepts of God. To learn Christ and his commandments aright, even though a man does nothing else, requires a whole life."

During these incessant labours of this indefatigable servant of God, his life was attempted to be taken away by poison. A Polish Jew, a doctor of medicine, came to Wittemberg, having agreed to perform this service for two thousand pieces of gold. Luther describes him as a man of wonderful cunning and versatility; and as capable of committing any crime. The doctor and his accomplices were seized, and carried before a magistrate: but they refused to make any confession, and Luther entreated that they might be set at liberty, rather than be examined by torture, according to the custom of those times: though he expresses his entire belief that the accused was the very man of whom he had been warned by the letters of certain friends.

Those labours of Luther which he employed on the sacramental controversy can afford but little satisfaction to Christian readers. We are compelled, indeed, in reviewing them, to recognise that integrity of principle, that reverence for the Scriptures, and that sensibility of conscience which ever marked the character of this great reformer; but, alas! all these excellent qualities were in this instance sullied by a lamentable blindness of understanding, and obstinacy and perverseness of temper. Luther, Zwingle, Œcolampadius, Brentius, and his Suabian brethren, all now took part in the dispute; and all of them, if we except perhaps Œcolampadius, with a faulty spirit: but we shall not occupy the time of our readers with a subject at once so painful and so uninteresting. The divines of Strasburg, with Bucer at their head, took great but unsuccessful pains to promote conciliation: while the papal party beheld these dissensions

with infinite satisfaction. "How dangerous," said they, in triumph, "was it to desert the parent church! Doubts, difficulties, and contentions must be the inevitable consequence."

Yet, upon an impartial review of the case, a dispassionate student of the controversy would probably be disposed to say, How easily, with the assistance of a little mutual candour, moderation, and Christian forbearance, might the whole dispute, in this stage of the contention, have been settled, or at least suspended, and complete concord restored among the evangelical brethren! For, though, on the one hand, the Lutherans had certainly been too much inclined to maintain the corporeal presence and corporeal manducation of the body of Christ, in the gross sense of those terms; and, on the other hand, the Zwinglians had on some occasions justly rendered themselves suspected of an intention to deprive the sacrament of all its spirituality, and to reduce the ordinance to a mere commemoration of the person of Christ, it does not appear that any such striking and specific difference of sentiment between the Saxon and the Swiss divines had hitherto been insisted on, as should have made it necessary for either of the parties to require from the other a distinct and humiliating retraction, much less to persevere in an unchristian hostility. In fact, these learned and excellent men, on both sides, seem to have been ignorant at first of the true state of the question, and also of the sentiments of each other. Then, during the heat and violence of their opposition, molehills became mountains; novel fancies arose concerning the sacrament, which had never been thought of in the commencement of the dissensions, and which were invented purely to support arguments that had been once incautiously advanced; and these for a long time afterward afforded material for vain and unedifying disputation.

CHAPTER XIV.

State of Parties—First Diet of Augsburg—Dangers of the Protestants—Treaty of Magdeburg—First Diet of Spires—Reformation of Hesse—Luther on Resistance, and on the War with the Turks—Mary of Austria—Writings and Anecdotes of Luther—Persecutions.

THE avowed and unequivocal support, afforded to the reformation by the new Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse did not produce all the good effects which might have been expected from the wise and vigorous measures adopted by those illustrious princes in the best of causes. Their example, indeed, was followed by all the most enlightened princes and states of Germany; and, in consequence, an improved union, more solid, and better cemented than ever, took place among them. But the rest, who, under the cautious and ambiguous conduct of Frederic the Wise, had hitherto shown themselves averse to an open rupture, so soon as they clearly perceived that the reformers designed to withdraw themselves from the Romish communion, and to reject the jurisdiction of the pontiff, instantly took fire at the very idea of such a basis of peace and concord. Some of them had stood neuter during the violence of the religious differences; and others had even joined the Lutherans in their complaints against certain abuses of the established church; but none had ever once dreamed of entirely deserting the religious system of their ancestors; and, as matters were fast advancing to a crisis, they now thought it high time to make an open declaration of their attachment to the established hierarchy, and of their zeal and readiness to promote its interests. Thus the discordant princes of Germany more formally arranged themselves into two distinct parties, each of which seemed resolutely determined to adhere to its peculiar tenets.

But there was this essential difference between the patrons of popery and of Lutheranism. All the measures of the latter were in principle purely defensive; whereas the

former meditated the complete extirpation of their adversaries. Foiled in arguments repeatedly, they seemed to have given up the contest in that way, and to have expected better success by having recourse to slander. The late rustic war in Germany had afforded them a pretext for this purpose. They represented the Lutherans as bad subjects in general, and as the prime cause of the late rebellion, and of the bloodshed which had followed. Moreover, though the rebels had been severely handled at Mulhausen, yet fresh commotions were apprehended from the operation of the licentious doctrines of Munzer. Hence the Electors of Mentz and Brandenburg, with the Duke Henry of Brunswick, and his uncle Eric, had had a conference at Dessau, where they made no secret of declaring that the only radical cure of the evil would be to free the nation from the Lutheran heresy, and from those who protected it. This interview of the enemies of the reformation gave rise to much suspicion and anxiety in the mind of the Landgrave of Hesse; especially, as with a view to the distracted state of the country, he had recently requested a friendly meeting with his father-in-law, the Duke George, and had received the surly answer, "That before any thing could be done to the purpose all the late innovations in religion must be effectually done away." These proceedings had so little ambiguity in them, that the Lutherans began about this time to deliberate seriously how they might best evade the blow with which they were threatened by a powerful and bigoted confederacy. They retorted the accusation of having been the cause of the rebellion of the peasants, and justly ascribed that sad event to the cruel persecuting spirit of the nobles and the dignitaries of the church. Various conventions of the princes were held in different places. At Salfeld, in particular, they came to this resolution, "That it became them, as Christian princes, to do every thing to promote the glory of God, and to conform their practice to the revealed Word: that by this Word the true doctrine of justification, through the mercy of God by faith in Jesus Christ, was now once more revived; and that for this great benefit eternal thanks were due to Almighty God." The parties transmitted their resolution to the Duke George, and at the same time animadverted severely on what had passed at the late assembly at Dessau.

Meanwhile mandatory letters from Charles V. to his brother and representative Ferdinand, dated Toledo, May 24, 1525, calling for a diet of the empire, increased both the discontent and the alarm of all those German princes who favoured the reformation. The letters breathed nothing but the execution of the edict of Worms, and destruction to the Lutherans. Charles directed the diet to be held at Augsburg, on the next Michaelmas-day; and privately, in a milder tone, requested the Elector of Saxony to be present. But this prince, at the instance of the landgrave, resolved upon a previous measure, admirably calculated to defeat the violent designs of the papal party. This measure consisted in forming a speedy association with all the moderate and well-disposed states of the empire; such as the Elector Palatine, the Elector of Treves, the Margraves of Brandenburg, the Dukes of Luneburg, Pomerania, and Mecklenburg, the Prince of Anhalt, the imperial cities of Nuremberg, Strasburg, Augsburg, Ulm, and Magdeburg; the object of which association should be, to concur in representing to Ferdinand the imminent danger there was at this time of exciting fresh and more formidable riots and seditions, by any attempts to execute the edict of Worms; and how abundantly more wise and safe it would be, at the present moment, to come to some distinct determination and settlement respecting the religious differences.

The principal states of the empire agreed in the same sentiments; and even Ferdinand himself at length confessed the necessity of adopting pacific measures in the concerns of religion; and allowed the princes to send to the diet such of their theologians as they judged best qualified, by their knowledge and discretion, to prove useful advisers in the ensuing deliberations.

Accordingly, the Elector of Saxony and the landgrave instructed their deputies to represent to the diet, That their masters complained heavily of the harsh terms in which the imperial mandate for calling the diet was expressed: that, in fact, the late rebellion of the peasants, which the princes had suppressed at the hazard of their lives, was to be imputed to such ill-timed and provoking severities; that Divine truth could not be extinguished in the minds of men by force: that much greater evils than any which had yet happened would be the infallible consequence of the attempt

—besides the despite done to the Word of God; that those decrees of Nuremberg which respected the reformation of religion ought to be observed; and that, in a matter where the salvation of men's souls was concerned, the utmost care should be taken not to harass tender consciences, by increasing instead of diminishing the present evils. In fine, the deputies were ordered to oppose the execution of the edict of Worms with all their might.

Further, the Elector of Saxony, well aware under how much odium he laboured from the papal ecclesiastics, on account of the reformation in religion which he had authorized at Wittemberg, directed his theologians to prepare in writing, ready for the diet, a brief but comprehensive answer to the principal objections of the opposite party: and such a memoir is found among the archives of Weimar, neatly executed in the German language by the pen of Melancthon.

The following is a specimen of the author's manner of treating the subject. The question is, "Whether we are guilty of the sin of schism, in preaching certain doctrines, and abolishing certain usages, not only without the leave of the bishops, but in direct opposition to their injunctions? —for, as they can say nothing against our doctrine, they have no way left to condemn us, but by objecting to our want of authority from the ecclesiastical rulers. They argue, 1. The bishops, and none besides, possess any jurisdiction in the church. 2. They urge the infallibility of the church; and that therefore it is not possible there should have existed, for so many ages, the errors and idolatries which we have abrogated. 3. They put us in mind, that 'to obey is better than sacrifice;' and that we ought therefore to have been obedient to our superiors. Also, that we ought, 4. To have shown a charitable regard for tender consciences: and, 5. Not to have raised civil wars by licentious innovation."

Melancthon rests the defence of the reformers upon the following facts and principles. 1. Every minister of the Word of God is bound, by the express precept of Christ, to preach the leading doctrine of the gospel, namely, justification by faith in Christ Jesus, and not by the merit of human performances. Whereas nothing is more certain than that men have been drawn from the cross of Christ, to trust in their own works, and in a variety of superstitious vanities.

2. God has forbidden, under the most heavy punishment, every species of idolatry and false worship: and of this class are the sacrifice of the mass, masses for the dead, invocation of the saints, and such like; which things, though manifest blasphemies, it is notorious, have been taught in the church of Rome, and represented as sharing, in their efficacy to salvation, with the merits of our Redeemer himself. 3. The pope and bishops neglect their duty; exercise a usurped authority even over emperors and princes; and, under the pretence of serving Christ, apply the possessions of the church to the promotion of their tyrannical purposes.

On these grounds he argues, That the clergy, from the very nature of their vocation, have an unquestionable authority to preach the truths of the gospel; and, moreover, are the more loudly called on to do this, when the bishops are plunged in ignorance and luxury, and when they answer the admonitions and remonstrances of the reformers only by anathemas and persecutions: that the pope, the cardinals, and the clergy of Rome did not constitute the church of Christ; though there did exist among them some who were real members of that church, and opposed the reigning errors: that the true church consisted of the faithful and of none else, who had the Word of God, and by it were sanctified and cleansed: that St. Paul had predicted that Antichrist would come, "sitting in the temple of God:" and, that the reformers were not guilty of schism, either because they had convicted Antichrist of his errors, or because they had made alterations in some external ordinances: that the unity of the church did not consist in such things; and that whoever maintained that it did ought in every way to be most strenuously opposed: that to the charge of disobedience, the answer was easy: The pope and his bishops had exacted an unlawful obedience; nothing short of giving up the Word of God would content them; and by their excommunications and other persecutions of the reformed clergy, they themselves had at length stirred up the late rebellion in Germany. Lastly, he confirms his reasoning by quoting precepts of Christ himself, and by producing pertinent examples from the history both of the Christian and the Jewish church. "The great doctrinal point," says he, in conclusion, "is that of faith in the merits of Christ,

independently of human works, as the ground of acceptance before God. Rather than give up this, we must suffer persecution, and every species of disturbance."

In the same memoir, Melancthon touches upon another question, namely, Whether the princes had done right in authorizing the reformations which had been made in their colleges and monasteries, contrary to the edicts of the emperor and the pope? "The whole," he says, "turns upon this single consideration, Whether the novel doctrines, as they are called, be or be not true. If true, the princes ought assuredly to protect them. The princes are no more under obligation to obey the higher powers in their tyrannical mandates, than Jonathan was to kill David, or Obadiah the prophets."—Such were the concise arguments by which the first reformers defended themselves from the charge of heresy and schism.

It is to the exertions of these excellent men, conducted with so much spirit, wisdom, and moderation, that we are to ascribe the mild proceedings of the papal partisans at the diet of Augsburg. In fact, that assembly did not meet till the month of November, and, from the advanced state of the season, and other causes, it was but thinly attended. The diet was prorogued till the third of May in the next year, to be then held at Spires; and they entreated the emperor, in the mean time, to take measures for calling a council, and to favour them with his presence in Germany. So far from directing the edict of Worms to be enforced, they satisfied themselves with repeating the evasive decree of Nuremberg, which, in general, enjoined the clergy to introduce no novel doctrines, but to preach the pure gospel as it had been understood always by the great body of Christians; to consult for peace and harmony, and do all to the glory of God. It does not appear that Ferdinand discovered any reluctance to subscribe the terms of the recess. The most violent and inveterate adversaries of Luther could not but see the folly and danger of all attempts, under the present circumstances, either to banish, or to take away the life of a man who was so much admired and beloved by his countrymen; and to whose extraordinary discernment, industry, and courage, not only Germany, but also many other parts of Europe, were under the greatest obligations.

This appearance, however, of lenity and moderation was deceitful, being founded, not in any solid principles of justice or religion, but merely in the temporary fear of tumult and sedition. Even during the sittings of the late diet, the ecclesiastical princes had shown themselves much elevated with the recent victories over the rebellious peasants, and, in consequence, more disposed to violent and sanguinary measures. Thus the present calm was considered by the more judicious and thinking Protestants as a prelude to a tempest, shortly to be raised by all the great powers of the established hierarchy, for the purpose of crushing effectually, not only the Saxon reformer and his petty adherents at Wittemberg, but every German prince and state, whether civil or ecclesiastical, that had dared to oppose or dissent from the communion of the Roman church.

Moreover, there were other reasons besides those that have been mentioned, which would naturally fill the minds of the Protestants with disquieting suspicions and apprehensions. So imbittered was the court of Rome against what it called the Lutheran heresy, that, in every treaty which the pope had of late concluded with foreign powers the absolute destruction and extirpation of all Lutherans was a specific article. For example, the ninth article of the treaty made by Clement VII. with the emperor, after the battle of Pavia and the capture of Francis I., runs thus: "Because religion, much more than any temporal concern, is near the heart of the Roman pontiff, and because the good faith of his holiness has been called in question, the emperor, the King of England, and the Archduke Ferdinand engage to take up arms with all their might against all disturbers of the Catholic faith, and against all persons who shall revile or injure the pontiff: and, further, the aforesaid princes take upon themselves to punish all such offenders against his holiness, in the same manner as if the offences had been committed against their own persons." In the autumn of the same year, this holy pontiff, whose thoughts, it seems, were so deeply and so entirely exercised concerning the advancement and protection of pure religion, deserted Charles V., and made a treaty with England and France, the primary object of which was declared to be, that the contracting parties should effectually withstand the brutal ferocity of the Turks, and also suppress that most

pestilential heresy of the Lutherans; for that there was as much danger from the latter evil as from the former, the said heresy having secretly spread itself to a great extent, and done much mischief to the Christian faith. In the famous treaty of Madrid, by which Francis I. recovered his liberty, it is expressly stated, that the emperor and the king are induced to make peace, that they may be able to extirpate all the enemies of the Christian religion, and especially the heresies of the Lutheran sect. The pope, they say, had often admonished and much solicited them to attend seriously to this important duty. It was, therefore, to satisfy his wishes that they had determined to entreat his holiness to give directions for a general council of the deputies of the kings and princes, to meet at a fixed time and place, then and there to consult on the most effectual method of carrying on the war against the Turks, and also of suppressing heresy.

How vigilant and indefatigable was this pontiff in rousing the adversaries of religion, and endeavouring to make them active and resolute in persecuting the little flock of true Christians, wherever they could find them! Among many of his epistolary admonitions and exhortations written for this purpose, there is one even to the parliament of Paris. He had been informed, he said, that impious heresies had begun to creep into France; and that the parliament had wisely interposed, by choosing commissioners for the detection and punishment of the offenders. He entirely approved, and by his authority confirmed, the steps they had taken: it was a common concern: the mischief was general, and was to be ascribed to the malice of Satan, and the fury of his impious agents. Not only religion, but also governments, kings, princes, nobles, all ranks and orders, were on the brink of destruction. It was a time when the common safety called for unanimous exertion. He promised that on his part no care or labour should be spared; and it was *their* duty, he told them, to enter into the same views with their whole heart, and to preserve their country from that calamitous infection which infallibly attended the dissemination of this contagious heresy.

Another source of anxiety and alarm to the Protestant confederate princes was the steady co-operation of Charles V. with the pope's tyrannical designs. Charles, by

mandate from Seville, in March, 1526, directed his lieutenant-general Ferdinand, and the rest of his commissioners, to admonish the members of the diet, who were about to assemble at Spires, to make no resolutions which were either contrary to the Christian faith or to the ancient usages. He himself had already abrogated the late decree of Nuremberg, which had enjoined an examination of Luther's writings; and would shortly concert measures with his holiness respecting a general council. The resolutions of those partial assemblies, he said, had done no good; but had rather confirmed the licentious vulgar in their errors; and that the diet would do well to regulate all their proceedings by that standard which had been settled by their own common consent. He complained, that doctrines which had been condemned were still taught, holy men reviled, and seditions encouraged.

This imperial mandate was intended by Charles V. for the public eye. But, besides this, he caused private and secret instructions to be delivered to Henry Duke of Brunswick, the general purport of which, as it soon became matter of notoriety, affected the minds of the good Protestants with much greater concern than any public document could do; because it seemed most clearly to demonstrate the extreme hostility of the emperor's disposition towards any species of reformation. The duke was commissioned to visit several such princes of the empire as were known to be perfectly untainted with Lutheranism; for example, the Archbishops of Cologne and Bremen, the Bishops of Munster and Minden, the Elector of Brandenburg, and several others. He was directed to show his instructions to some of them, to deliver civil messages from the emperor to others, and to make them all acquainted with the grief with which his imperial highness had heard of the daily increase of the Lutheran heresy, which had already given rise to so much bloodshed, devastation, and blasphemy. The duke was to add, that the steady adherence of these princes to the ancient religion had afforded the emperor the most lively satisfaction; and that his highness intended very shortly to advise with them in person, concerning the best remedies to be used in this most destructive distemper. He was then to declare, on the emperor's part, that he should not permit any other of his concerns to interfere with this: and lastly,

he was to exhort the princes to persevere in the faith, to unite themselves with all the anti-Lutherans, and, in one connected body, to resist with effect, and finally to suppress, the cunning and deceitful arts, as well as the violent and seditious outrages, of this mischievous faction. Charles concluded his instructions with saying emphatically, "That he should not be wanting in his endeavours to promote the good cause; that he heartily thanked those who had hitherto shown their zeal and fidelity, and that he would not fail to reward their services liberally."

The precise manner in which these secret communications came to the knowledge of the Lutheran princes does not appear; but as copies of the memoir were sent to several other princes besides Henry of Brunswick, we need not wonder that its contents were soon divulged.

This secret memoir, there is reason to believe, contributed to produce some important consequences. It fomented distrust and animosity among the states of the empire. In particular, the Duke of Brunswick was suspected of having calumniated the Lutheran princes, and of having endeavoured to poison the emperor's mind, by instilling a belief that the reformers made proselytes by using force; and, moreover, that they were the real cause of the late rustic rebellion. It produced, further, an entire despair of the emperor's justice and impartiality in any future attempt to adjust the religious differences. He lent his ear to slanderous reports, and afforded the accused no opportunity of justifying themselves. It likewise proved beyond all doubt that a treaty had been concluded against the gospel of Christ and the free promulgation of his sacred Word. The landgrave, on the occasion of this conviction being forced upon his mind, declared solemnly, that he would rather lose his life than be driven in this manner into poverty and exile. Lastly, it showed the urgent and increased necessity of a counter-treaty, for the purpose of confounding the machinations of all the adversaries of Christian truth and of liberty of conscience. Undoubtedly the pope and the emperor were most to be dreaded, as the great engines of ecclesiastical tyranny and persecution; nevertheless, it was now become sufficiently clear that there existed also within the German empire many powerful agents, who were completely disposed to concur with those wicked despots in their destruc-

tive and sanguinary designs against the infant reformation. It was discovered, that for these very purposes a secret treaty against the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse had been made at Mentz, under the auspices and management of the Duke George. Luther, whose vigilance and industry were unexampled, both acquired a knowledge of this conspiracy, and wrote a little treatise for the purpose of exposing the authors of it. It was, however, thought better to suppress the work; and at present there remain only some fragments of it in the German edition of Luther's works. In a letter to Spalatinus, he alludes to these events in the following manner: "You can scarcely believe what mischief Satan is plotting at this moment, through the medium of the bishops, with the Duke George at their head. Shortly, in a little book, which is at this very time in the press, I purpose to give you a specimen of his iniquitous proceedings. If the Lord do not prevent the accomplishment of the designs of these men, you will have to say that the late rebellion and slaughter of the rustics was but the prelude to the universal destruction of Germany. I therefore seriously beseech you, join your prayers with me to the Father of mercies, that he may be pleased to confound the wild and insidious devices of these men; especially of the Duke George—a deplorably lost character, I do fear. Let us beseech God, either to change his heart, or to remove him from among us: otherwise he will not only continue to rage like a wild beast, but, through the instigation of the prelates, will show himself a perfect Satan. It so torments the man that Luther is not yet put to death, that he can neither sleep nor wake; insomuch that there may be some reason to fear his being worn out by the excessive anxiety of his mind on this very account.—Gracious God! what a load has our good prince to sustain! not merely as Elector of Saxony, and an avowed friend of the reformers amid numerous hostile princes, but also on account of the wicked machinations of some of his own familiars and intimates, persons of rank and consequence. I have abundance to tell you concerning plots and evil counsels; but I dare not commit it to writing."

The curious student of ecclesiastical history will now see what just cause the Protestant princes, especially the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse, had for appre-

hending the most imminent danger to their dignity and property, and even to their lives, from the fury and barbarity of papal superstition; and how necessary it was become to form a well-connected defensive alliance, which might prove some protection and security against the impending storm. The diet of Spires was at hand; and if the anti-papal princes should meet there without previous communication of sentiment, the consequence must be confusion, reserve, and imbecility, instead of unanimity, courage, and strength. No time was therefore to be lost; the present moment seemed critical in the highest degree. Actuated by such views and principles, those resolute and spirited Protestants, John the Constant and Philip Landgrave of Hesse met at Torgau, and there agreed upon a treaty of mutual defence, in opposition to the tyranny of the ecclesiastics. Their next step was to invite others to join in the alliance; and in a few weeks afterward, at Magdeburg, they met together again, and again subscribed the same treaty, with the addition of a considerable number of princes, who followed their example.

The Magdeburg treaty, as it is called, does honour to the cause of the gospel, is worthy of the courageous Christian characters who joined in it, and, as it seems to have been the foundation of the famous league which was afterward formed at Smalkald, we shall give the substance of it in this place.

The federalists begin with praising God for his extraordinary providence, his grace, and his unspeakable mercy, in having bestowed upon them his sacred Word, which is the only true comfort, the real food of the soul, and the greatest treasure in the world. They then proceed to relate the numerous and powerful machinations with which to the present moment they have been disturbed, especially by the clergy and their adherents, whose object it was to deprive the people of the use of the Holy Scriptures, and of those comforts which the Scriptures afford to the heart and conscience. They express a hope that God will continue to them this great blessing of the Bible. They were ready to have repaired to the late diet at Augsburg, there to treat concerning religion and harmony, but were prevented by the advanced season of the year. They had now the same intentions in regard to the diet of Spires. They were convinced, by the information which they received from all

quarters, as also by the various meetings and discussions which had recently taken place, that factions were formed, leagues and treaties entered into, and money collected; and all this, in the intention of maintaining by force the old abuses, of extinguishing the truths of Divine revelation, and of waging war against those princes and rulers who felt themselves bound in duty and conscience to profess and protect the gospel in their dominions, and who injured no person living, nor committed any acts of violence whatever. Impelled therefore by their own consciences and a sense of their duty to God, for the reasons above mentioned, and without meaning to act offensively against any one, they had mutually agreed upon a plan of pure defence against the war and violence with which they were threatened: and they hereby engaged to unite and exert every power they possessed against all those who, under any pretence whatever, should attack them on account of their religion.

The diet did not assemble at Spires till near the end of June, 1526; but it was unusually well attended. All the electors except the Elector of Brandenburg were present.

The Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse, during the deliberations of the members, appear to have preserved a steady attention to the very prudent project which they had recently formed; judging, it would seem, that they should serve the Lutheran cause more effectually by strengthening their TREATY OF DEFENCE, than by long arguments and debates on points of religion, before an assembly which contained so many bigoted ecclesiastics and selfish politicians. Accordingly, they took occasion to address the deputies of Strasburg, Nuremberg, and Augsburg on the subject of mutual defence. They were convinced, they said, of their love for the gospel; and there could be no doubt of the machinations of the prelates and other agents of the pope at the present time: ought not therefore an association or alliance to be formed on this principle, namely, that if any one should be brought into difficulty or danger on account of religion, the federalists should support one another? They added, that, as they had a good opinion of the cities of Frankfort and Ulm, it might be proper to ask them also to join the confederacy. To this the deputies replied, that they had no express instruction on that sub-

ject; but they promised to be particularly careful in reporting the proposal to their masters.

At the opening of the diet, the emperor's representative informed the members, it was the pleasure of his imperial highness that in the first place they should proceed to determine the best method of securing the Christian religion and the ancient usages of the church; then, how they should punish offenders, and compel to obedience such as forcibly resisted their injunctions; and how they could unite their mutual and effective efforts to procure the execution of the edict of Worms, which was now of five years standing. Upon this, the diet selected a committee, composed of bishops, secular princes, and leading senators, who should propose regulations for the adjustment of the religious differences. But the emperor's representatives interposed, by saying that it would be most to the purpose for them to read to the diet the instructions which they had received from their master; this would best ensure obedience to him, and prevent the loss of that time which the committee might otherwise spend on subjects to which their authority did not extend. They then read the emperor's mandate from Seville, as above reported.

Most of the deputies answered in writing, That it had been fully proved to the pope's legate, in a former diet, that it was then absolutely impossible to execute the edict of Worms, through fear of the commotions which would arise: that now the attempt was become abundantly more difficult, because the religious disputes were daily increasing, especially about ceremonies and abuses: and that the emperor, were he present, would form the same judgment. In regard to the promise of a general council, that promise was made by the emperor when in treaty with his holiness; but, since the date of the emperor's letters, the pope had changed sides, and ordered his forces to act against his imperial majesty. What prospect then could there be of a general council? Under such circumstances, it was their opinion that the emperor's leave should be asked to call a provincial Germanic council; that either delay or an attempt to execute the edict of Worms was unspeakably dangerous; and that, therefore, if his imperial majesty did not approve of the expedient of calling such a council, he should be entreated to dispense with the execution of the

aforesaid edict, till a general council could be called. Such, they said, had been the plan of the last diet of Nuremberg; and, since their intended convention at Spires had been interdicted by the emperor, the expectations of many of the states had been disappointed, and the disposition to tumult and civil war much increased. In fact, the rebellion of the peasants, they said, might have been avoided, if attention had been paid to the representation of the grievances which the country suffered from the ecclesiastics. In those districts where a reformation had taken place, the disturbances had been slight, and presently quieted. No changes whatever had been made in that true and holy faith which was founded on Christ and his eternal immutable Word; neither had any ceremonies been rejected but what were contrary to the Scriptures. Lastly, they observed emphatically, that, in a state of discord, uncertainty, and anxiety respecting their own condition, men could not be much disposed to contribute their money liberally to the assistance of others.

After this, the deputies, in a distinct memorial, ventured to point out certain practices, which they thought called for alteration or entire abolition. In every town, they said, the poor inhabitants were burdened with what were denominated mendicant monks. These stripped men of the comforts of life; and, in many cases, procured legacies and estates to be devised to them by dying persons. These things were mischievous to the last degree, and called loudly for correction. The ecclesiastics, also, ought no longer to enjoy those immunities, for the granting of which the reasons no more existed. Likewise the number of holydays ought to be lessened; the distinction of meats abolished; and, above all, the free course of the gospel should not be impeded.

Such bold and prudent remonstrances as these must have given the pontifical partisans an insight into the steady character of the German reformers. In particular, the Elector of Saxony most strictly enjoined his counsellors to beware of the corrupt arts of the bishops, and to stand inflexibly firm to the cause of the gospel. It was, however, chiefly through the numerous suffrages of the towns and cities, and especially those of the higher Germany, that the reformers acquired so considerable an ascendant in this diet.

The leading ecclesiastics, who, as Father Paul acutely observes, had no other aim than the preservation of their own authority, maintained, that now, during the discord between the emperor and the pope, it was impossible to come to any decisive conclusions respecting the religious dissensions; and that therefore that business had better be deferred to a more favourable juncture. No doubt, they conceived that, as dignified ecclesiastics, both their authority and their revenues would be more effectually supported by the pope acting at a future time in concert with the emperor, than by the emperor alone in the present circumstances. The members also of the select committee before mentioned differed so exceedingly among themselves, and the opposition to any reformation was conducted with such prodigious heat and acrimony, that there seemed to be an end to all sober deliberation. Spalatinus's observation on what he saw at this diet is, that "Christ was extremely odious to the Pharisees." He adds, that neither the elector nor the landgrave were allowed to hear their own chaplains in the churches; and that on this account these princes caused sermons to be preached in the vestibules of their hotels, where many thousands of people collected together to hear the doctrines of the gospel.

Disgusted with such violent and unprincipled proceedings, and seeing no prospect of an amicable conclusion, these princes and their adherents meditated to withdraw themselves from the diet and return home. Ferdinand instantly took the alarm; convinced that, if the assembly should break up in their present state of animosity and exasperation, without making any decree, all Germany would be in a flame. He had, moreover, received recent information that the Turks had advanced into Hungary; and also that France, England, and the pope were in treaty against the emperor. In this critical conjuncture he wisely determined to recommend moderation and harmony to the contending parties; and at length, by using gentle and soothing language, he, with the assistance of the Archbishop of Treves, seems to have prevented a most mischievous rupture in the diet, and to have produced among its members a more pacific and practicable disposition. The difficulty still remained, to determine in what terms the decree, or recess, should be expressed, so as to be sufficiently respectful to the

emperor, and yet perfectly consistent with what had been proved, after long and warm altercations, to be the sentiments of a great majority of the deputies. At last the reformers suggested the following expedient, which was consented to by the whole assembly: "That the welfare of religion, and the maintenance of the public peace, made it necessary that a general, or, at least, a national council, should be called, to commence within the space of a year; that the emperor should, by a solemn address, be requested to procure such a council; and that, in regard to ecclesiastical concerns and the edict of Worms, the princes and states should, in the mean time, till either one or the other sort of council was called, undertake so to conduct themselves in their respective provinces as to be able to give to God and to the emperor a good account of their administration."

Thus terminated, in a manner more advantageous to the Lutherans than they could have expected, the diet of Spires. The resolution of the recess, it is true, was but evasive; yet such were the existing circumstances, that a truce of this sort answered all the purposes which the most zealous friends of the reformation could desire. Their divines preached and wrote with greater confidence and less molestation; and the anti-papal feeling continually increased and spread itself. It was natural that those who had already rejected the Romish superstitions should proceed more vigorously, during such a season of liberty, in digesting and maturing their new systems of ecclesiastical government; and also that several princes or states, who through the apprehension of danger had hitherto with reluctance continued in close communion with the establishment, should now grow cold in the cause they had long disliked, or perhaps renounce at once, if circumstances permitted them, that corrupt communion, and adopt the new model of worship and church government already made to their hands in the electorate of Saxony. And such, we are told, were the real effects of the ambiguous decree of the diet of Spires, in 1526.

We must not omit to mention how much the beauty and excellence of pure evangelical principles showed themselves at the diet of Spires in the exterior conduct of the Lutheran princes. The Landgrave of Hesse, about a week before the meeting of the diet, represented to John Frederic, the

son of the elector, how necessary it was that those who pretended to be advocates for reformation of doctrine should themselves be careful to afford examples of good moral conduct in their own families. He entreated the young prince to state this matter seriously to his father, and thereby prevent the debauchery and excess which usually took place at such public seasons, among the domestics and servants of the great. The elector received the admonition like a good Christian, and enjoined his whole retinue to observe the most laudable regulations. And thus these good Protestants and their families, who have been reviled by papal historians for breaking the Roman Catholic rules concerning fasts and meats and drinks, during their residence at Spires, were in fact adorning their profession by temperance, soberness, and chastity.

Whatever be our religious principles, provided only they be near our hearts, they will infallibly direct our practice. Thus every true Roman Catholic lays immense stress on the doctrine of transubstantiation. And the Swiss historian Hospinian informs us, that, agreeably to this faith, John Faber, vicar of the Bishop of Constance, was at the diet of Spires, and there, with many tears, conjured the assembly, if they did nothing else, at least to take special care that Christ himself, and of course all the salvation by Christ, was not taken away from them, by his body being trampled under foot. This attempt, he said, was now in the contemplation of those men who denied the real corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament. The same historian observes, that the popish divines were well aware that the doctrine of the real presence is the very foundation of their religion; and that if it be once taken away, there is an end of both their dignity and their gain.

The ardent temper of Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse, was a remarkable contrast to the cautious, dilatory disposition of the late Elector of Saxony. Unmoved by the pressing solicitations of the Duke George, his father-in-law, and also of his mother, Anne of Mecklenburg, the landgrave, immediately upon his return from the diet of Spires, earnestly endeavoured to carry forward the reformation which in some degree was already begun in his dominions. Melancthon, who had been consulted on this occasion, attempted

to check the fervour of this prince, by a letter full of good sense, yet savouring a little of the natural timidity of the writer. He advised him by all means, in the present critical times, to proceed by gradual advances, and never to lose sight of the grand distinction between things essential and things in their very nature indifferent. The preachers on the side of the reformation, he said, were too contentious; and frequently their differences were about mere trifles. A public teacher should not only inculcate faith, but also the fear of God, and universal charity and obedience to magistrates. He dreaded a civil war, and would rather die than live at such a time. "Your highness," continued Melancthon, "might do a great deal with the princes, if you would exhort them to take pains to understand the several points in dispute, and endeavour to terminate the ecclesiastical contentions."

The landgrave, not quite satisfied with the lukewarm advice of Melancthon, and anxious to have the pure gospel of Christ taught in all the churches under his jurisdiction, appointed an ecclesiastical synod to be held at Homburg, in the month of October, 1526, for the express purpose of determining the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the reformation. He was also assisted by a French divine of excellent character, named Francis Lambert, who first composed a summary of pure evangelical doctrine and of the errors of the Church of Rome, then published his propositions, and afterward boldly presented himself before the synod and a great multitude of Hessians, as an advocate and defender of the system which he had submitted to the general inspection and judgment. The landgrave and his chancellor were present, and allowed perfect freedom of discussion; but as no material opposition was made to the propositions of Lambert, and as they were completely Lutheran in their purport, it may not be necessary to enter into any detail concerning them. His twenty-second proposition thus speaks of faith and justification: "We are not justified by a mere historical faith, but by a real lively trust in God; and this without any works of obedience even to the law of God: much less then are we justified by any works of our own contrivance. Such a faith, however, is always fruitful, and produces a willing obedience. It also makes a man free; yet not free so as to be absolved from

obedience to magistrates. Neither can it possibly be that a faithful soul should abuse true Christian liberty. The man who does abuse it is not in possession of true Christian faith."

Under the auspices of an adviser like Lambert, we need not wonder that the new system of doctrine and discipline which the landgrave promoted in Hesse had all the principal features of the reformation in Saxony. Soon after the synod of Homburg, he ordered the monks and nuns to leave the monasteries; and by means of their revenues he founded several hospitals, and also a university at Marpurg. He directed the images to be taken out of the churches, and appointed faithful ministers in each of them: and among his various new institutions, he remembered to fix the poor exile Lambert in the professorship of divinity at Marpurg, where the good man died at an advanced age, in the year 1530.

During these transactions, and while the labours of the reformers were crowned with such signal success, Martin Luther, who was never behind any of them in zeal, industry, and exertion, exhibited to the world a brilliant specimen of the purity of his principles, and of his entire submission to the injunctions of the gospel. We have already seen that the accession of the landgrave to the Lutheran cause had considerable influence in Germany. The gentle, pacific decree of the diet of Spires is a proof of this; and so is the commencement of a defensive confederacy, and the progress made in that prudent measure. But it was not without difficulty, it should seem, that this bold and enterprising prince, in the vigour of youth, and conscious of the goodness of his intentions, could be restrained within the limits of defensive operations. John the Constant, however, under the direction of a sounder discretion, and probably of a more scrupulous conscience, checked this hasty disposition to take up arms, and in the mean time consulted Luther on the momentous practical question of resistance. As this very circumstance evinces the high estimation in which our reformer was then held as a sage divine and an honest casuist, the reader will do well to consider whether the answers which he gave on this occasion correspond to the opinion undeniably prevalent at that time respecting

his superior wisdom and integrity. The following judgment of Luther was conveyed to the elector through the medium of his chancellor Pontanus. "That the Elector of Saxony had no superior but one, namely, the emperor; and that therefore he was justified in defending his own subjects, and also in repelling any violent acts of his adversaries among the princes. That, if the ecclesiastical princes, or their allies, should pretend to have the emperor's orders, the elector was not bound to believe them: that he had a right to presume such orders to be surreptitious: for that Charles V. was in Spain, and that his letters to the elector breathed nothing but kindness and peace. That, if the edict of Worms should be made the pretext, the answer should be, It was notorious that that edict was fabricated without the sanction of the princes, and against the consent of the leading ones; that the prelates, and they only, had concurred in it; that it had, in fact, been abrogated by the decrees of Nuremberg and Spires; that therefore all attempts of the princes and states to execute the said edict were unjust, and might be resisted with a good conscience."

The nice and delicate question remained still to be answered, What was to be done, supposing the emperor should avowedly arm the adverse party with his authority? A puzzling question this; and which probably has never yet received, nor can receive a better answer than that which Luther gave to it. "The elector and his friends," he said, "would still be at liberty to protest and remonstrate: in that way the rights of the princes might be preserved, and the fraudulent practices of their adversaries detected: and, in every event, TIME WOULD BE GAINED BY THIS STEP: and, lastly, God would take care of the rest."

He then deprecates, in the strongest terms, every idea of commencing an offensive war, or any war otherwise than against aggressors; agreeably to the grand rule, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." And he concludes with these remarkable words: "If the landgrave will not act consistently with these principles, but will at all events have recourse to arms, it will be better for the elector to dissolve the alliance at once. But not so in case force should be used against the elector, or the landgrave, or their allies: they will then have a right to repel force by force."

There is no part of Luther's character which appears to have been less understood or more misrepresented than that of his quiet peaceable disposition as a citizen, and in general as a member of civil society. From the strong language which he often uses against popish abuses and corruptions, and from the vigorous efforts he made to correct or reform them, he has been too hastily pronounced to be a man of a turbulent and seditious stamp. An abundance of testimonies, however, many of which we have adduced, prove satisfactorily that there is no ground whatever for such an opinion; indeed, that directly the contrary is the truth: but these testimonies have been almost entirely either suppressed or disregarded by modern historians.

The same valuable memorial on the question of resistance contains another piece of admirable advice which Luther gave to the elector, namely, That his highness would do well, seriously, and in writing, to admonish his clergy of their neglect of duty, and to tell them that this was so very great as to have compelled him to take the matter into consideration himself: that the salvation of men's souls, as well as the peace of the community, in these times of dispute and contention, imperiously required him to ensure better instructions from the pulpit: and that, as a clear proof that these were the sole objects of his monition, he should for the present content himself with earnestly entreating them to promote among his subjects pure evangelical doctrine, and to cultivate a spirit of tranquillity and concord: but that if, after all, they should fail to do this, he would no longer run the hazard of tumults in his dominions; he would no further bear their neglect and opposition to the gospel, nor any longer be a partaker in their guilt. At the conclusion of this wise counsel, Luther adds a remarkable clause, to this effect: "I have persuaded myself that such a step on the part of the elector may be useful, by demonstrating to mankind the purity of the motives of the reformers, and by affording comfort afterward to their own consciences, in the reflection that they can say with truth, 'Nothing which was not directly opposite to the Word of God was left untried for the prevention of a rupture with the superior clergy.'"

It may not be improper in this place to give a brief

account of Luther's sentiments concerning the war with the Turks. The Hungarian ambassadors had been at the late diet of Spires, to solicit assistance against them; but, through the excessive folly and presumption of Lewis II., King of Hungary, Solyman, who was then invading his kingdom at the head of 300,000 men, obtained a decisive victory in the plains of Mohacz, on the 29th of August, 1526, only two days after the recess of the diet. In this fatal battle the flower of the Hungarian nobility perished, with upwards of 20,000 men, and Lewis was drowned in his flight. The victorious sultan, after overrunning Hungary, penetrated into Austria, and even besieged Vienna. This progress of the infidels was truly alarming; and an indistinct notion prevailed that the reformers thought it wicked to fight against the Turks. In such circumstances it became the duty of a man who possessed the power of directing the judgment of so many thousands of the inhabitants of Germany, to speak plainly, and to rectify such misconceptions as might prove injurious to the safety of his country. The duty of a Christian soldier was a point which Luther had deeply considered, and, in forming conclusions on the subject, he constantly rested with an implicit obedience on what he conceived to be the Divine will, as revealed in Scripture.

It was in the year 1529, when the enemy was even at the door, that our author published, in the German language, a little tract, for the purpose of rousing his countrymen to take up arms in the common defence. In this performance he chides severely the common people, who, he understood, had shown themselves so ignorant and barbarous as to express wishes for the success of the Turks; and at the same time he blames the preachers for having dissuaded their congregations from being concerned in this war, and for representing the profession of arms as unlawful. It was painful to him to find himself calumniated as the cause of the present irruption of the infidels, as he had been also of the rebellion of the peasants; but there was no ground whatever for the charge. He did not deny, he said, that formerly he had maintained, That to fight against the Turks was to fly in the face of God himself, who was visiting us for our sins; and that this was one of the positions which had been selected from his writings, and condemned

in the bull of Leo X. But, he asked, what were the existing circumstances at that time? The dignity of magistrates and governors was oppressed, and held in no estimation; and the pope exercised a usurped domination over all the princes. He affirmed that he himself was the first who had opened men's eyes on that subject, to the great satisfaction of the late Elector Frederic. In fact, the war with the Turks was then the war of the pope; it was an offensive war, and a war founded on no good principle: it was made a pretence for exhausting Germany of its money by the sale of indulgences: and neither penitence nor amendment of life, without which it is in vain to hope for success in war, was so much as thought of. Moreover, it was at the same time pretended to be the peculiar duty of Christians to take up arms against the infidels; whereas he scrupled not to profess an opinion directly opposite. He conceived that the duties of men, considered as Christians, consisted in things of a very different nature; and that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world. Still less had the pope and the clergy to do with wars; and no success could be expected where bishops and priests neglected their proper functions to attend to military concerns. He had been told on good authority that Francis I. well deserved his late defeat at Pavia, for having made an alliance with the pope, and taught his army to view the contest in which they were engaged as the cause of THE CHURCH, and to use the word CHURCH as a watchword. Had there, however, at that time really existed any threatening symptoms of war, he would have taken care to make his meaning more clear and distinct. At present, the circumstances were very much altered: the war was become strictly defensive; the enemy had no just ground for waging war at all against the Christians, and their objects were purely plunder and murder. Such invaders might be resisted with a good prospect of success, even by Christians with the emperor at their head. But then the Christian soldier ought seriously to turn to God in prayer, both public and private, and no longer lay stress on processions, private masses, and invocations of saints. The emperor also should not wage the war to gratify ambition and a thirst for glory, but should consider himself as the leading prince, and as placed in that situation by Almighty God to discharge well the great duty of con-

ducting the defensive operations of the people. All the princes ought to view the matter in the same light, and no longer contend in the diets for precedence, or consume their incomes in luxury. These, also, said he, are the points upon which the pope's legates ought strenuously to insist at the meetings of the diets, instead of squabbling with Luther about fastings and the marriages of the monks.—There appears throughout this little work much of the author's native candour and vigour of mind, and of his reverence for the written Word. But we return to the course of our narrative.

It was to be expected, from the active spirit of Luther, that he should employ to some important purposes that precious interval of tranquillity which the church enjoyed after the diet of Spires. The regulation and improvement of the liturgies and rites of those churches which had embraced the new doctrinal system of the reformers was an object well worthy the serious attention of that able pilot who had safely conducted his vessel through so many shelves, and rocks, and tempests. He proceeded in this business with the utmost caution and modesty: he published the new mode of administering the sacrament, adopted in the last year at Wittemberg; but in his preface he says, "Far be from me the affectation of requiring other persons either to follow our example, or to alter any good formularies at present in use. The plan here proposed has its merit, but I am in nowise prejudiced in its favour to the exclusion of others." In the next place he provided homilies to be read by such ministers as had not the gift of preaching—a very necessary precaution while evangelical knowledge was at so low an ebb. He also recommended the study of the Latin tongue throughout the dominions of the Elector of Saxony, that there might be men capable of instructing foreign nations; lest, like the Waldenses in Bohemia, they should not be able to communicate Christian information to any who did not understand the language of their teachers. Further, the catechising of youth was one of Luther's favourite objects: and he insisted on the exposition of the creed, of the Lord's Prayer, and of the ten commandments, as of the highest moment. Thus, by the use of moderate and conciliatory methods, though the advances towards

perfection were gradual, the public order of religion, through the indefatigable labours of this eminent servant of God, in no great length of time wore a new aspect in Saxony, to the unspeakable benefit of that country.

One of Luther's publications in the year 1526 was an exposition of certain Psalms; which was intended by its author to serve a peculiar good purpose, beyond the instruction which it might afford to his countrymen in Saxony. He inscribed the work to Mary of Austria, the relict of Lewis King of Hungary—whose miserable death in flight we have already mentioned. This princess was the sister of Charles V., and of Ferdinand, who succeeded to the kingdom of Hungary. Our author had conceived hopes that she would tread in the steps of her sister, the Queen of Denmark, and that family afflictions might, under Divine Providence, operate in a similar manner to her spiritual good. In his dedication, he tells the queen, that with much delight he had heard of her good-will to the gospel, and had purposed to entreat her to promote with all her might the cause of God's Word in Hungary, and to protect the innocent from the persecutions which, he understood, they suffered from the powerful and tyrannical prelates; but that having now heard the sad story of the king's death, he should content himself with suggesting to her mind some consolatory reflections, drawn from the best and truest source of comfort, the sacred Scriptures. With his usual frankness he takes occasion to explain to her the nature of the evangelical cause, which he himself had now supported for some years past; as also the iniquity of that bitter hostility which he had experienced from the Roman see. With a dignified elevation of style, he vindicates the courageous, the innocent, and, in general, the truly religious character of John Huss; and, lastly, he reminds the princess of the instability of all human power and grandeur, and exposes the vanity of placing any hope or confidence in these. In fact, there seemed to be very fair ground for apprehending that Mary might become an exalted ornament of Christianity. In the year 1530 she was present at the diet of Augsburg; and while there would not be hindered from hearing evangelical discourses. Moreover, she boldly admonished her brother, Charles V., not to suffer himself to be duped by his clergy, as her husband Lewis and her brother Ferdinand had been. Alas! pros-

perity afterward severely tried the soundness of the religion of this princess, as it has done that of thousands besides. Being called to the administration of the government of the Low Countries, which had long been the scene of most barbarous papal persecutions, she avoided the suspicion of Lutheranism, and is said to have returned back to the profession of popery. It is, however, recorded to her praise, that she conducted herself with singular prudence and moderation. So mild and pacific were the principles of Mary, that when Charles V. delivered over to his son Philip the care and management of his Belgian provinces, he recalled his sister into Spain; suspecting that her counsels would rather obstruct than promote the objects which he had then in view. It is remarkable, that a kind Providence should have favoured this emperor with the instructive warning of having two sisters who listened to the precious invitation of evangelical religion. We wish there were more proof that the consideration of the dealings of God with his female near relatives made some useful impressions on his mind in the latest scenes of his life.

Mary had a favourite chaplain, named John Henckell, a man of excellent principles, who favoured the Lutheran cause, and was afterward present with the queen-dowager at the diet of Augsburg, in 1530. Erasmus, of whom it is now unnecessary to say that he grew daily more and more hostile to Lutheranism, wrote to this good divine a long letter, penned with all that ambiguous prudence, guarded artifice, and malignant insinuation which have fixed indelible stains on the character of this eminent scholar. With consummate address, he professes to point out and praise a sort of middle path in religion; and at the same time, with a delicate adulation, insinuates that his friend Henckell, to whom he was writing, was among the few persons who were actually treading that path.—The events which followed justify the historian in observing, that such systems of refinement and mediocrity are, in effect, perfect chimeras; that the cross of Christ must be borne by those who mean to glorify God, to preserve a good conscience, to rebuke, by their lives and conversation, the evil practices of the world, and to promote the salvation of mankind. Erasmus during many years was employed on his nugatory scheme; and, while he courted the favour of the great, and secured him-

self from the danger of persecution, he promoted not one of those peculiar truths of Christian doctrine on account of which the good reformers suffered grievously from the tyranny of powerful princes and prelates.

It would detain us too long to make copious extracts from the discourses which Luther about this period, amid his multiplied occupations, still found time to compose. The following sentence on the epithet "Wonderful," applied to Christ in Isaiah ix., is in his own striking manner: "The man whom he chooses to make truly godly, he causes first to feel himself almost a despairing sinner: whom he chooses to make wise, he first makes a fool: whom he chooses to make strong, he first renders weak: he delivers to death the man whom he means to quicken; he depresses to hell whomsoever he intends to exalt to heaven ..... This is that WONDERFUL KING, who is nearest to those from whom he seems to be the most remote."

Anxious for the extension of evangelical knowledge, the pious Elector of Saxony had instituted a theological lecture at Wittemberg, with a salary of two hundred florins. Melancthon, the lecturer, scrupled to accept the salary, alleging that he had not leisure to discharge the duty properly: nor could his scruples be removed but by an explanatory letter from the elector himself, written to him at the instance of Luther, who ventured to tell the prince, that were Melancthon to receive the proposed salary gratis for a year or two, he would well deserve it, having already during two years read very laborious and very useful lectures on the Scriptures without any salary at all. "The knowledge of the Scriptures," said Luther, "is much called for in every country; and therefore I would gladly promote a lecture of this sort. But there is no need to encroach too much on the time and strength of the lecturer: a lecture of this kind, even once in the week, might answer the purpose." Anecdotes like this might seem of little consequence, if any thing could be said to be of little consequence which illustrates the simplicity, the integrity, and the disinterestedness of the first reformers.

Another instance of Luther's kind and generous attention may deserve to be noticed. He interceded with the elector in favour of certain Franciscan monks of the monastery of

Wittemberg, who were reduced to a state of extreme indigence. "This neglect is not your fault," said he to the prince; "but there are among your courtiers those who ought to have mentioned to your highness the situation of these poor creatures. It is a disgrace to the gospel, and who knows but there may be among them some one who shall judge us all at the last day."*

Numerous are the proofs of the gentle steps by which the reformation was conducted in the electorate of Saxony, notwithstanding all the fictions of the papal historians. Indeed, if real Christians have, on any occasion, been active in promoting revolutions by violence and iniquity, all we can say is, their evidence of belonging to Christ's little flock must, at that particular season, be deemed very slender and suspicious. The maxims of the gospel are widely different from those of the world in general, or even from those of conceited theorists and lofty pretenders to philosophy. It is, however, but too true that the visionary notions of the latter have been much celebrated in our days; though, happily, it is at length pretty well understood that they are not only unsupported by facts, but even confuted by the practice of the very persons who professed to adopt and defend them.

The blessed calm which the church enjoyed after the diet of Spires must not be understood to have extended beyond those provinces and districts which were under the jurisdiction of such princes and governors as were favourable to the propagation of Christian truth and liberty. In Bohemia and Hungary, Ferdinand, now king of both countries, raged against the Lutherans with all the fury which papal ignorance and superstition, exasperated by opposition, could inspire. The rigour of the persecution in Bohemia may be inferred from a single instance. A person named Nicholas Tornar, and a widow of sixty years, named Clara, suffered death in the flames with Christian fortitude, merely because they denied their belief in the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament.

In Germany also two remarkable instances of martyrdom are recorded. John Huglin, minister of Lindau, was directed by the Bishop of Constance to recant the reformed faith;

* 1 Cor. vi. 2.

and on refusal was treated precisely as John Huss had been, that is, degraded in the most abusive language, and then delivered over to the secular power. This man, while he was preparing for the fire, sang several songs of praise with the utmost cheerfulness. The other martyr, Peter Spengler, had nothing laid to his charge, except that he had been heard to lament the blindness of the papists, and to exhort their clergy to read their Bibles. By stealth he was hurried away to Friburg, delivered over to the council of regency at Ensisheim, and by them condemned to be held under water till he was dead.

At Munich, the capital of Bavaria, George Carpenter was burnt alive in 1527, because he refused to subscribe to the Romish corruptions. This sufferer, when some of his pious brethren requested him to give them, while in the flames, some sign of the firmness of his mind, answered in these memorable words: "Let this be looked upon by you as the most certain sign of the steadiness of my faith, that as long as I am able to open my mouth, or even to mutter, I will never cease to praise God, and confess the name of our Redeemer:" and it is said the man kept his word.

But one of the most affecting stories of this kind is the martyrdom of Leonard Cæsar, in the same year, 1527. He was born in Bavaria; and, having begun to preach the gospel, was summoned to Passau, to answer for his conduct; and there, by imprisonment and menaces, was at length induced to recant, and was dismissed to his parish, and allowed to officiate again. Leonard, however, was so upbraided by his conscience, and inwardly ashamed of his unfaithfulness, that in about six months he quitted his station, and visited Wittemberg and other places where evangelical liberty flourished. After two years' absence, hearing that his father was at the point of death, he ventured to return to his own country, where the minister of the village betrayed him; and Leonard was carried to Passau, and there imprisoned during ten weeks before he underwent the least examination. At length, when reduced to a very weak condition, he was called upon to answer hastily a variety of questions, read to him by the famous Eckius of Ingolstadt, who had been sent for on purpose to interrogate, confound, and overawe the poor heretic. His own relations earnestly solicited him to retract; but, finding entreaties vain, they

begged he might be allowed to have an advocate, and also a month's respite to recruit his feeble, debilitated frame. All was refused by the popish rulers; and Leonard was brought publicly before a solemn tribunal of the bishop and a number of canons, with Eckius among them. Then it was that the persecuted prisoner, armed with Divine strength, rose more formidable to the powers of darkness, than if, through infirmity, he had never been guilty of a former lapse in denying the faith. His adversaries peremptorily ordered all the proceedings to be carried on in Latin, for the purpose of keeping the multitude in ignorance. But Leonard scrupled not before the whole audience to speak German repeatedly, and to defend the doctrines he professed with prodigious spirit and animation. He was frequently interrupted by the official of the court, and told that he was not brought there to preach. The grand Protestant doctrines were the articles he maintained. "Faith alone," said he, "justifies: works are the evidences of faith; but, in the act of justification, works are as distinct from faith as heaven is from the earth. The mass is no sacrifice; neither is there any sacrifice for sin, except the blood of Christ." He refused to enter into any dispute about transubstantiation; and contended that it was enough to insist on the words of Christ, and to believe that faithful communicants become real partakers of his body and blood.

This good martyr wrote from his prison to his friend Stifelius, at that time chaplain to a lady of distinction in Austria, in strains of the most unaffected piety, thanking God, who had honoured his most unworthy servant, and the greatest of sinners (so he called himself), with such an opportunity to confess his precious name, blessed for ever! He entreated his dear brother in Christ to pray for him, that he might remain steadfast to the end. Much pains were taken to procure his release and dismission. Noblemen of the first distinction, even the Elector of Saxony himself, interceded with the potentates of Bavaria, but all to no purpose. The popish hierarchy proceeded to degrade him, and then gave him up to the civil magistrate; but not without first going through the usual mockery of praying that his life might be spared. His mournful relations, entirely against his own wishes, made their last effort to obtain the poor favour that their kinsman might be allowed to die by the

sword instead of the flames. But the stern Duke of Bavaria, instigated no doubt by his priests, issued a peremptory mandate, "for committing the incorrigible heretic alive to the flames."

The man's patience and constancy in prayer, the ardour of his soul, and his confidence towards God, are described as beyond belief. When the dreadful moment came, and he was placed on the pile, he said, "O Lord Jesus, partake in my sufferings; support me; give me strength!" and lastly, as soon as the fire began to burn, he cried out with a loud voice, "Save me, Jesus; I am thine!" and soon after expired. Luther was vehemently affected with this tragedy; and professed himself ashamed, as he had done on former occasions, that he had not yet been thought worthy of martyrdom. "O," said he, "that I might witness such a confession, and suffer such a death! But God's will be done! O ye persecutors, if ye thus thirst after blood and carnage, why do ye not turn your arms against the Turks? For, after all, ye cannot oppress the cause of God. I gave you Gamaliel's advice when I was before the emperor at Worms; but all is in vain." To their common friend Stifelius he speaks thus of the death of Leonard. "Oh wretched me, how far below this man am I! I am a wordy preacher, he a powerful performer. May Christ grant that we may be enabled to imitate this holy character!"

CHAPTER XV.

*Luther's Temptations—His Freedom from both Enthusiasm and Melancholy.**

But Providence had designed trials for Luther more calculated than martyrdom itself to humble and subdue his spirit, and to perfect the strength of God in his weakness. The uncommon success with which his labours had been

*The chapter is giving nearly verbatim from Dr. Milner.

crowned, the celebrity of his character, the favour of princes and nobles, and the admiration in which he was held by all the professors of evangelical truth, were circumstances which had a strong tendency to exalt him in his own eyes, especially when the native firmness and intrepidity of his temper are taken into the account. In fact, however, this extraordinary man had never been without "a thorn in the flesh," which proved an effectual counterpoise to all his attainments and all his successes, and prevented him from being "exalted above measure." What was the nature of that thorn in the flesh which disturbed the tranquillity of St. Paul, it may not be easy to form even a probable conjecture; but in regard to Luther, his case may be understood without much difficulty by those who are conversant in his writings, and who have themselves in some degree tasted of the grace of God in the Christian life. It was not a propensity to carnal gratifications, but to a peculiar species of spiritual pride and self-righteousness. I call it peculiar, not because many of the very wisest and best of Christians have not felt the same evil from age to age, but for the purpose of distinguishing it from that more common and more dangerous sort of pretension to spirituality which leads the mind to boast of its attainments, and to rest in an Antinomian security. Persons of this latter stamp are usually careless and easy; and in the end frequently prove altogether unsound. Those of the former rarely or never do so; and for this reason, there is in their character, at bottom, a profound humility, together with a quick and lively sense of the evil of sin. Their defect properly consists in unbelief. The fulness, the freeness, the extent of the loving-kindness of God in redemption is veiled from their eyes: they cannot believe that God is so plenteous in goodness and mercy as in Scripture he is represented to be; and hence, as a consequence of this blindness, proceeds that peculiar sort of self-righteousness so destructive of evangelical comfort. They are too sinful, they think, to be saved just as they are: they must make themselves, at least, *somewhat* better before they are entitled to mercy. Thus, notwithstanding all the real humility of this character, there is in it still some mixture of pride, which is only to be subdued at the cross of Christ; where the true penitent sinner at length learns, that the very way to frustrate the mercy of God is

to mix, in the great concern of justification, any of his own petty performances with the merits of the Redeemer.

The malicious policy of Satan is, to let alone the spiritually proud Antinomian; that is, to leave him pleased with his own attainments and regardless of personal holiness, while he buffets with all his might the poor Christian soldier of Luther's opposite temperament. Here, by his artful temptations, he works secretly upon what is called in Scripture "the old man;" and by false imaginations and plausible reasonings endeavours to reduce the soul to despair, to hide from it the consolations of the Divine promises, and to drive the distressed sinner into a state of legal bondage, or even into atheism itself. In the active scenes of Luther's life, in the distress of his external persecutions, in the heat of his controversies, in his wars with the papacy, or even in his pacific employments of preaching and writing comments on the Word of God, little or nothing of this sort appears: it is in his closet, in his conversations with his intimates, with his parish priest, or his wife; or when his fellow-labourers vex and irritate him by their opposition; or, lastly, when his own health and spirits are broken down by incessant toils, and cares, and watchings; these are the seasons when in private we may expect to see the Saxon hero of the reformation more or less, according to circumstances, in a state of imbecility and confusion of mind, or even of fear, anxiety, complaint, and tribulation.

But be it remembered, that, extreme cases excepted, there is in the public deportment of Luther no material difference to be observed. He thinks, he reasons, he writes, he preaches, precisely in the same manner. Nay, he knows how to give the very best spiritual advice to those who apply to him under afflictions similar to his own. He even sometimes jests with such persons with a view to do them good, when he thinks their case calls for encouragement to cheerfulness; and yet internally he is perhaps much disposed to blame himself for having gone too far in that way. It is recorded, that on one occasion he cried out, "People conclude from my ordinary gay conversation that I walk on beds of roses, and on nothing else; but God knows what I daily feel." All this may appear strange and contradictory to those who have not been conversant with such things. The solution is, Christ, the Head of the church, both protects its members

from delusion, and at the same time disciplines his ablest servants by afflictions; and though sometimes the "thorns in the flesh," called "messengers of Satan," may cause great tumult and distress in the souls of faithful ministers of the gospel, such trials shall not ultimately avail, either to the subversion of doctrine or the declension of godliness.

That great defect in meekness, which is constantly to be deplored in the character of the Saxon reformer, as it doubtless gave the tempter a great advantage over him, so did it require the very discipline and chastisement here described. By a strong and piercing understanding, Luther had discovered the revealed remedy of our fallen nature, and enforced the use of it with almost unexampled wisdom and energy: nevertheless, this great physician fails to apply, in his own malady, the efficacious medicines he has so often prescribed with success to others.

Early in 1527 a remarkable scene occurred of the kind we have described. We behold that high unconquered spirit, which stood calm and secure amid the rage of popes and princes, lie prostrate under the pressure of internal temptation. An infectious disorder prevailed at Wittemberg, and the elector ordered the academics to retire to Jena; but Luther thought it his duty not to desert his flock. At the same time he severely but justly rebuked several, who when in health had altogether neglected the sacrament, and now in the hour of danger eagerly pressed for the administration of it, even at the peril of the minister's life. In the course of this year he suffered much, and for a considerable time together, from bodily complaints, and thereby became extremely debilitated afterward; but it does not at all appear that he was attacked by the prevailing epidemic: that disorder, however, was in his house for many months, and his wife was at that time pregnant. No wonder, therefore, that he should describe his spirits as weak and agitated, and often oppressed with fears and perturbations. Then it was that Satan seems to have taken the advantage, to inject his fiery darts into the mind of this devoted servant of God, at a time when almost every object appeared grievous and alarming to his irritable imagination. The dilapidation of the ecclesiastical revenues by the avarice and rapacity of the nobles, who took advantage of the excessive good-nature of the elector, was another serious affliction to the mind of

Luther; who, in regard to his own personal condition, was perfectly disinterested, and was only anxious that, through the means of judicious and economical regulations, there might be sufficient funds for the improvement, extension, and new foundation of various Protestant establishments. Then the opposition of the sacramentarian reformers gave him sensible uneasiness; though in this he certainly ought to have confessed that his chief suffering arose from the mortification of his pride, and that he had no very material reason to complain of want of respect on the part of Zwingle, Œcolampadius, and other excellent persons, whom he ought joyfully and cordially to have received as brethren and fellow-soldiers, fighting in the same cause of a persecuted gospel. It is true that Zwingle, in the course of controversy, could sometimes use language sufficiently bitter and contemptuous; but Luther ought still to have remembered, that he himself had been in that respect the aggressor to a most vexatious degree. He did indeed remember it, and with many tears, as we shall see; but it was his duty to have owned his fault long before; not merely in his chamber to a few private friends, but openly to all the world; and to have repaired the breach both by candid acknowledgments and by ceasing from the strife. But Luther did neither one nor the other. I have no desire to conceal the blemishes of the Saxon reformer. He possessed uncommon excellences; but they were stained with faults by no means inconsiderable. It is perfectly right that we should in this manner thoroughly examine the characters of men of real holiness; that we may distinguish them from the fictitious perfectionists of the stoics, and learn to give the praise to that God who is justly jealous of his own glory.

Let us now listen to Martin Luther discovering the secret weakness and distress of his soul; and let us keep in mind that this is the very same man who was every day bidding open defiance to the greatest powers of Europe, both civil and ecclesiastical, and voluntarily hazarding his life for the sake of Christian truth and liberty. "My sins," he says, "have brought upon me the heavy wrath of God. It is not enough that the pope, the emperor, the princes, and the bishops should aim at my life, but my religious brethren also must torment my spirit. My sins, and all the powers of death, Satan and his angels, rage without ceasing. And

what is my hope? I say, if Christ should forsake me I am undone. But he never will forsake such a poor miserable sinner. Mine enemies are mighty; and add affliction to affliction, now that I am under the Divine chastisement. But enough; let me not be querulous or impatient under the rod of Him who smites and heals, who kills and makes alive. Blessed be his holy will! When the world and the prince of the world hate me in this manner, it is surely some proof that I belong to Christ. The critical situation of my wife increases my anxiety; and I am quite alarmed at what has just now happened to another lady, one of our neighbours, in similar circumstances. She has been carried off rapidly by the prevailing epidemic. My present trials are great; but the all-powerful One has done great things for me. May Christ, whose pure doctrine I have taught and openly avowed, be my rock and my fortress! Amen." Thus he wrote to Justus Jonas.

To Amsdorff he said, "It so pleases God, that I, who have been accustomed to comfort others, do myself stand in need of consolation. I have but one prayer, and I beseech you join with me in it—that, whatever Christ may be pleased to do with me, he would preserve me from ungratefully rebelling against him, whom I have hitherto preached and served with so much zeal; though at the same time I have offended him by many and great sins. I still hope he will forgive me, and say, 'I am thy salvation.'"

To other correspondents he writes: "There is nothing that my sins do not deserve; but nevertheless I have comfort in the thought that I have taught the gospel of Christ in godly sincerity, to the salvation of many souls. This galls Satan; and he would destroy me, together with the WORD itself. While others are called to the stake by the cruel tyrants, I suffer internally in spirit from the prince of this world. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ perfect in me his holy will! Oh, how precious and delightful is the secret contemplation of that will!" "I am still under the malice of Satan, who continues to buffet me. Pray for me. I have now languished for nearly three months, yet not so much in body as in mind; and I am still far from well." "So may Christ comfort you," he says to his beloved friend Hausman, "as you comfort me. I thank my God that Satan, with all his wonderful craft, and all his power-

ful exertions, has not yet been able to gain his will upon me. This is no ordinary temptation; and so skilful is that wicked one in perverting the Scriptures, that my own knowledge of the sacred writings fails me on this occasion: I stand in need of the help of my friends, and I am thankful for their consolatory communications. I open my case to you in this manner, that you may pray the more earnestly for me; and may also yourself in like circumstances, if ever they should happen, be aware of 'the depths of Satan.'"

In the midst of his humiliation and confession of sin, we find Luther repeatedly taking comfort, as holy David did, from a consciousness of the integrity and purity of his motives. Thus he writes to Melancthon: "Pray for me: I am a miserable abject worm of the earth, distracted with sorrow. But, as this is the good will of the Father of mercies, glory be to him, whatever be my sufferings. In regard to myself, there is but one thing on which I lay any stress; namely, that I have ever taught the word of God in its purity, and on no occasion corrupted the truth, either through a love of glory or of gain." To another friend he says, "Be serious in your prayers for me, that Christ may not leave me destitute; for I am utterly without strength. I am sensible that I stand in need of temptations, that God may be glorified in me, and that I may be humbled; and I have still a good hope that Christ will accept me, though I have listened and do listen too much to the devices of Satan. It is astonishing how he can transform himself, not to say into an angel of light, but into Christ himself. I am compelled to own his power; for he is outrageous in his attacks upon me. But Christ hath faithfully preserved me, and will preserve me unto the end."

The truth of the history of Luther's extreme suffering, in the course of these temptations, does not depend entirely on the descriptions contained in his own letters to his friends. Bugenhagen and Justus Jonas were present during one of the most severe attacks; and were so much affected by what they saw and heard, that they thought fit to record in writing some of the most material circumstances. This was in July, 1527. But more than six months before that time intense distress and agitation of spirit had laid hold of our reformer. For he writes thus to Jonas on the 26th of December, 1526. "Oh, my Jonas, pray for me; sympathize with me in the

agonies I undergo. The temptation is sometimes less, but returns again with greater fury. May Christ never forsake me! May he chastise me as a son, but not punish me as a rebel! May I be strong in faith, even unto the end!"

The substance of the account giving by the above-named friends of Luther is as follows. About eight o'clock in the morning of Saturday the 6th of July, Bugenhagen was alarmed at being hastily sent for by Luther. He found him, however, in conversation with his wife, and looking as usual. It seems he had that morning experienced a most tremendous temptation, entirely of a spiritual nature; and was seriously apprehensive, that, if the hand of God should again be so heavy upon him, he could not survive the attack. On the whole, he suspected he was about to die; and retired privately with Bugenhagen, the parish minister, into his chamber, and there in secret committed every thing to God, and solemnly confessed his sins; and then, says the writer, my MASTER entreated me, his PUPIL, to give him a word of consolation from the Scriptures. Afterward he recovered so far as to be able to go out to dinner, and make the company cheerful, as he always did. But in the evening he was suddenly seized with a fainting fit; and cried out, "Oh! Doctor Jonas, I am sick; bring me water, or whatever you have, or I am gone." Jonas in a fright snatched up some cold water, and threw it freely over him. At that moment Luther was the very picture of death; but presently after he began to pray most intensely: "If this be my last hour, O Lord, thy will be done! O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger; chasten me not in thy heavy displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord. I would willingly have shed my blood in the cause of thy Word; but perhaps I was unworthy of that honour. Thy will be done! Only may thy name be glorified, whether by my death or my life."

He then, in the most solemn manner, recommended to the blessing of God that ministry of the sacred gospel, which had hitherto been committed to his charge. Upon which Bugenhagen, almost senseless from deep and anxious concern, interrupted him by saying, "Among your other prayers, my dear doctor, let this be one, that it would please God to continue your life for the good of us poor creatures, and of many others." "To die," replied Luther, "would be gain to me, but...." and then, without finishing the sentence,

he thus seriously addressed Justus Jonas: "The world delights in falsehoods; and it will certainly be said that I recanted my doctrines in the hour of death. I desire, therefore, you and Bugenhagen to be witnesses of this my confession of faith: I am perfectly satisfied that the doctrines which I have taught, concerning faith, charity, the cross, and the sacraments, are verily agreeable to the Word of God. I was led by Providence, and not voluntarily, to act the part which I have acted in the ministry. Many have blamed me for being deficient in moderation. However, in some instances there was in me no want of moderation but what may be justified; and most assuredly I have never intended harm to any person whatever. On the contrary, I have always wished to promote men's salvation, even the salvation of mine enemies."

After this, Luther gravely stated to the same persons his objections to the sacramentarians; calling God to witness the sincerity of his heart, and lamenting with tears the numerous sects that arose, and neither spared the flock nor the Word of God. "What a bustle," said he, "will they raise after my death!" And then, with deep sighs, and a vast effusion of tears, he confessed how intemperate he had been at times in his language; and appealed to HIM who knows all things, that in this he had given way to the infirmity of the flesh, thereby endeavouring to shake off the burden of his afflictions; but that his conscience did not reproach him with having harboured any ill-will. "Be ye my witnesses, however," said he, turning his face towards his two friends, "that, on the subjects of repentance and justification, I recant nothing of what I have written against the pope. I feel that to be the gospel of God, and the truth of God; and, though some may think I have been too harsh, or taken too great liberty, I do not repent in that matter."

Luther then began to inquire after his child. "Where is my dearest little John?" The child was soon brought smiling to the father, who immediately commended "his good little boy," as he called him, and his mother, "his dearest Kate," to a good and gracious God. "Ye have no worldly goods," said he; "but God, who is the Father of the orphan, and judges the cause of the widow, will defend and keep you. I give thanks to thee, O Lord God, that thy providence has made me indigent in this world. I have

neither house, nor land, nor possession, to leave. Thou hast blessed me with a wife and children, and these I return back unto thee: O feed them, teach them, preserve them!"

To his wife he said, "My dearest Kate, if it is God's will, I request thee to submit to it: thou art my wedded wife; this thou wilt never forget; and let God's Word be thy constant guide." He proceeded to say something to her concerning a few silver cups, and concluded with these words, "You know we have nothing else." His wife displayed on this trying occasion extraordinary Christian fortitude. Almost heart-broken and frighted even to consternation, she yet preserved a good hopp in her countenance. She allowed that not only herself and her child, but many other Christian people, would experience a great loss; but she entreated her husband not to be uneasy on her account, for if it really was God's will that he should depart, she could submit to it cordially. She therefore commended him to the Lord God, under whose protection he could not fail to be safe.

By the external application of warmth, and by the use of cordial medicines internally, Luther soon recovered from the apparently immediate danger; but such had been the violence of the paroxysm, that he experienced the debilitating effects of it during the remainder of the year.

On the Sunday succeeding this memorable Saturday, Luther declared to Jonas, that on comparing the agony of his mind, during the spiritual temptation in the morning of the preceding day, with his bodily afflictions in the evening, the latter had not been half so distressing as the former. He added, "Doctor, I must mark the day; I was yesterday AT SCHOOL."

Afterward he underwent many exacerbations of mind of a similar nature to that described, but none equally severe. Yet Bugenhagen assures us, that during all these trials Luther attended to every part of his duty, that he seldom omitted his public lectures, and generally preached on the Lord's day. Bugenhagen was frequently called during the hours of the night to visit him in his distress; and repeatedly heard him say, "The violence of the temptation stupifies me so that I cannot open my mouth. As soon as ever it pleases God that I can lift up my heart in prayer, and make use of scriptural expressions, it ceases to prevail."

Bugenhagen tells us that he found real satisfaction in being of some little service to Luther, through whose instrumentality God had been pleased to reveal to him the gospel of his Son.

There are, I believe, those who will not be displeased to see this eminent servant of God in his imbecility; and to whom the narrative may be even consolatory and instructive. They will observe that such instances, when well considered, incontrovertibly prove that the excellence of evangelical power is of God, and not of man. Hence the nature of true Christian experience is both illustrated and confirmed. Let us regret sincerely the strength of our reformer's prejudices, the violence of his temper, the asperity of his language; but let us be glad, that in the hour of affliction at least, he bitterly lamented his faults, and earnestly prayed "that he might not by them bring a scandal on the gospel." Amid all his blemishes, men of candour and discernment will be compelled to recognise the most unequivocal marks of purity of intention.

Those who are disposed to class this reformer among ENTHUSIASTS should pause, and seriously reflect what that word means in its ordinary acceptation, when applied to religious characters; and they may in the end be led to agree with the writer of this history, that few men, perhaps none, in any age, were ever less infected with that evil. I less wonder that by modern writers Martin Luther should have been suspected of a propensity to MELANCHOLY; because it is too much their practice to represent all deep concern and personal anxiety in matters of religion, and still more all the distresses, afflictions, mournings, and temptations of devout persons, as implying a melancholic temperament of the natural constitution. Instances of this way of judging are innumerable. The truth is, the Saxon reformer was naturally of a cast directly opposite to that which is here supposed; and Melancthon expressly declares, that he was of "A LIVELY, SOCIAL, GENEROUS turn of mind."

Luther himself was fully persuaded of the agency of Satan in the production of those temptations which afflicted him so grievously. Beausobre, on the contrary, peremptorily rejects the supposition, and without the least ceremony or hesitation pronounces them to have been the effect of melan-

choly. A single declaration of this kind, when made by such an author as Beausobre, who could not have been entirely ignorant of the private life of Luther, discloses at once the nature of the religious views and taste of the writer, and places it in a clearer light than many pages of cautious composition in divinity would probably have done. What a contrast to the positive decision of Beausobre is the following unaffected observation of the pious Bugenhagen, who, living daily in habits of the utmost familiarity with our reformer, must have known him thoroughly. "If these things," says he, "happened to the prophets, and to the apostles, and to others, and even to our Lord Jesus Christ, it is not so very wonderful that they should happen to Luther." Not one word of his being disposed to melancholy.

Yet it may not be improper to interpose a brief caution here suggested by the preceding remark of Bugenhagen. The book of Psalms, and that of Jeremiah, and the epistles of St. Paul certainly contain descriptions of sensations similar to those of Luther; and it must therefore be admitted, that the choicest servants of God may very often be under great temporary sadness and dejection of mind. This may arise from different causes: from a deep conviction of sin, and an awful sense of the wrath of God; as was Luther's case when he first entered the monastery, and for some time after: from great darkness of mind, and the hiding of God's face, of which David repeatedly complains; or from some unknown chastisement, as in the instance of St. Paul's thorn in the flesh. In the next place, we may safely admit further, that a true servant of God, under a severe discipline of this sort, may actually be reduced to a condition which shall in many circumstances *resemble* that of a person whose natural disposition is truly melancholic. But, when all this is granted, it will not follow that the darkness and dejection and grief of a sincere penitent are any proof at all of a naturally melancholic constitution. It is true, the temperament MAY be of that kind, and then probably the more severe will be the sufferings of the holy man: but these things do not necessarily go together; and those who think they do, have yet to learn the manner of God's dealings, in subduing the pride and stubbornness of his fallen creatures. The exclamation of Festus, "Paul, thou art beside thyself;" and the sentence of Beausobre, "Luther mistook melancholy

for a temptation of the devil;" appear to me to be instances of rash judgment, which are to be classed together, originating in a similar want of humility, of self-knowledge, and of submission to the Divine will.

CHAPTER XVI.

Visitation of the Electorate of Saxony—Luther on Resistance —Toleration—and Predestination—Conferences of Marpurg—Progress of the Gospel—Charles V. and the Pope— —Second Diet of Spires—First Protestants—Preparations for the Diet of Augsburg.

In the year 1527, John, the good Elector of Saxony, had ordered some steps to be taken towards a general visitation of all the churches under his jurisdiction, and in the succeeding year that important business was nearly brought to a conclusion. A directory for the use of the clergy of the electorate was composed by Melancthon, revised and corrected in some points by Luther, and lastly published under the sanction of the prince himself. The instructions were digested under eighteen heads, with an admirable preface by Luther; in which he shows the great use of ecclesiastical visitations, confirms the practice from Scripture, and censures the neglect of the dignitaries of those times. Among the names of the visiters are mentioned Luther, Melancthon, Myconius, Justus Jonas, and Bugenhagen; and also several laymen of less notoriety. These excellent commissioners fixed suitable pastors in the respective parishes; abolished the ancient superstitions in the most lenient and gradual manner; and at the same time gave every humane attention, consistent with their duty as visiters, to persons obstinately addicted to the forms of popery. Under their seventeenth article the duty of a bishop is described, though the term superintendent is adopted. "Every superintendent is carefully to inspect the conduct of the clergy of his own diocess; to examine candidates for holy orders; to take care afterward that they preach sound doctrine; and to

admonish and censure defaulters; and if they prove incorrigible, to represent their obstinacy to the civil magistrate, or even to the prince himself."

In the course of the year 1528, several circumstances occurred which cast much additional light on the real practical principles of the German reformers.

The Protestants beheld all the motions of the Romanists with extreme jealousy, and had already, as we have seen, concerted some measures for their own protection. In moments of so much suspicion and fear, it was natural that they should lend an ear to every story which was calculated to give them alarm. On very plausible evidence it was affirmed that a number of the first potentates of Germany, with Ferdinand at their head, had some months ago concluded a treaty at Breslau, of which one great object was, by an allied army to compel the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse to re-establish the ancient religious corruptions. It was further said to have been stipulated, that if the elector should refuse to give up Luther and his innovations, and if the landgrave also should persevere in his obstinacy, the leaders of the confederacy should divide the possessions of the vanquished, while the rest should be satisfied with pecuniary payments.

We leave it to the secular historians to develop the truth of this mysterious statement, which had wellnigh involved the states of Germany in all the horrors of a civil war. The historian of the church of Christ is chiefly concerned in the part which the reformers acted at such a crisis. Suffice it to say, that the mild and steady temper of John the Constant gave way at length to the warmth and impetuosity of the landgrave; and the two princes agreed, in the former part of this year, to raise an army of twenty thousand foot and six thousand horse. Almighty God, they said, had graciously bestowed on them and their subjects the rich gift of the gospel; and they thought themselves bound to protect their religion at the hazard of their dignity, their possessions, and their lives.

Suddenly the powerful influence of evangelical principles manifested itself at this juncture. The Wittemberg divines declared for pacific measures. Their leader Luther, with his associate Melancthon, wrote several letters to the elector, in which he confutes the reasoning of the landgrave, who

had argued that the steps already taken by their adversaries amounted to actual aggression. On the contrary, Luther contended that their prince the elector ought to wait till some overt act of incontrovertible aggression take place, or at least till the reports of an intended hostility were completely substantiated. As matters stood at present, the popish princes, though accused of having formed a conspiracy against their neighbours, positively denied the fact; and the imperial regency, which was a legal authority, had by express mandate ordered the Protestants to lay down their arms. "Here, then," said Luther, "Providence affords an excellent opening for peace, which you cannot with a good conscience reject; you ought rather to despatch a conciliatory and even submissive embassy to Ferdinand and the council of regency. It is true, the imperial order may probably have been obtained at the solicitation of your adversaries; nevertheless you ought to obey the supreme magistrates—especially when they enjoin nothing but what appears just and laudable. To speak plainly, I must repeat the protestation which I lately made before your highness at Altenburg; namely, that though it would give us the greatest pain to be separated from such a kind patron and parent as our prince, yet we must quit this part of the country, rather than be partakers of the infamy which will infallibly attach to your highness in the prosecution of unlawful hostilities; and, if I mistake not, many good men will follow our example. You had much better break the treaty you have made with the landgrave, than commence a war of this sort."—Such is the substance of Luther's admirable advice and remonstrance on this occasion. The memoir is in his own handwriting, subscribed also by Melancthon: and, in a similar strain of freedom and sincerity, these excellent men opened their minds to John Frederic, the son of the elector.

All this is the more remarkable because there is no doubt that secretly Luther was fully convinced that the treaty of Breslau was by no means a mere fiction; and Spalatinus, who had great opportunities of learning the interior counsels of several of the courts of Germany, has recorded his own opinion to the same effect. The more accurately we scrutinize the practical notions of the Saxon reformers respecting obedience to the "powers that be," the preserva-

tion of peace, and the justification of war, the more shall we be satisfied that they were all entirely derived from the sacred oracles.

The tender conscience of the Elector of Saxony was much affected by the arguments and suggestions of his Wittemberg theologians. Almost immediately he procured a modification of his late treaty with the landgrave, whereby it became purely defensive; and he also sent his son to the court of Hesse Cassel, to prevent the commencement of hostilities. The young prince, John Frederic, exhibited on this occasion a prudence not very common at his time of life. He said, "The circumstances called for a middle line of conduct: the friends of evangelical doctrine ought by no means to break the peace; but they should ever preserve a watchful eye on their persecutors, and ever maintain a posture of defence." But it was no easy matter to restrain the juvenile ardour of the landgrave, and to prevent him from marching his army into the possessions of his neighbours. At the head of his Hessian soldiers, he menaced his father-in-law, George of Saxony; and at the same time in excessively warm terms blamed the unseasonable moderation of the Elector of Saxony, which in a great measure he imputed to Luther. The differences, however, were for the present happily composed, and without bloodshed, through the mediation of the Elector of Treves and the Elector Palatine.

It was painful to the mind of Luther, as well as injurious to the cause of the reformation, that after all that had been done to repress the fury of the Anabaptists, that fanatical sect continued to increase, and diffuse in all directions its contagious influence. Never was the grand maxim, that religious sentiments are not to be eradicated by persecution, more strikingly verified than in the conduct of these rebellious fanatics. Not only in Germany, but almost in every part of Europe, princes and magistrates used the utmost severity in punishing these sectarian teachers, and in preventing the dissemination of their tenets. In effect, all good governments had reason to dread the progress of the Anabaptists, who taught the people to despise their lawful rulers, and the salutary regulations by which all communities subsist. George of Saxony had alarmed his cousin

John, the elector, by intimating the danger there was of new seditions in Thuringia. "The common people there," he said, "were expecting their real Lord and Master to appear shortly in defence of his own Word and Gospel; and even in the alehouses talked of their hopes and prospects without disguise." Everywhere it was the cry of these enthusiastic visionaries, "No tribute—all things in common—no tithes—no magistrates—the kingdom of Christ is at hand—the baptism of infants is an invention of the devil!" These and many other extravagant notions the deluded zealots maintained with an unconquerable fortitude, worthy of a better cause. Neither the sword, nor fire, nor gibbet could induce them to recant.

Notwithstanding the absurd principles and detestable practices of the German Anabaptists in the former part of the sixteenth century, we cannot doubt that of the vast multitudes included under that denomination there must have been many persons of sincerely pious and pacific dispositions; though probably unlearned, and liable to be led away by impassioned enthusiasts or artful incendiaries. Luther has left a brief but important testimony to the character of some of these men. "Satan," says he, "rages: we have need of your prayers. The new sectarians, called Anabaptists, increase in number, and display great external appearances of strictness of life, as also great boldness in death, whether they suffer by fire or by water." But, as patience and courage in suffering persecution were looked on by the sound and judicious Protestants as by no means constituting the only essential qualifications of a reformer, it was impossible that Luther and his associates should receive the Anabaptists as friends and partners in the great struggle for Christian truth and liberty. They detested their turbulence and sedition, while they pitied their folly and delusion, and their pretences to extraordinary sanctity. Meanwhile the Anabaptists themselves claimed a connexion or good understanding with the Lutherans, as often as it suited their purpose; and the papists, either ignorantly or through artifice, always represented Luther as the grand culprit, and the various sects as ramifications of his fundamental heresy. Discrimination was deemed needless by men who considered all opposition or disobedience to the established hierarchy as the greatest of crimes, and were

ready to punish the offenders with the most unrelenting barbarity.

In whatever way such wilful or careless misrepresentation of the facts might serve the purposes of error or iniquity, it behooved those who loved light rather than darkness to exhibit themselves examples of godly truth and sincerity. And here the diligent student of the reformation is presented with an excellent opportunity of narrowly inspecting both the principles and the practice of Luther. Balthazar Hubmeier had been an eloquent and useful preacher of the gospel in Suabia, till Munzer infected him with his mischievous notions. From that time Balthazar became an active leader of the Anabaptists, and raised disturbances in one place after another, till he was at length seized in Moravia, and suffered under papal cruelty in the flames at Vienna. "I wish I may be deceived," says Zwingle, speaking of him, "but to me an immoderate thirst for praise and for money appear to be his sole motives." Balthazar, to promote his own views, had represented, in a little publication, the sentiments of Luther as the same with his own. A calumny of that kind was not to be passed by in present circumstances without some notice. Luther published a brief reply, which consisted chiefly of an appeal to his own sermons, and to the well-known fact that there was not a single Anabaptist to be found in all the electorate of Saxony. At the same time, he took occasion to reprobate the cruel sufferings inflicted on the poor wretches by the persecutions of the ecclesiastical rulers; insisting with the utmost precision on that grand distinction of which this reformer never lost sight—that errors in articles of faith were not to be suppressed by fire and sword, but confuted by the Word of God: and that recourse ought never to be had to capital penalties except in cases of actual sedition and tumult. The blindness and darkness in which such men are often left, said Luther, are in themselves a sufficient punishment.

The following declarations abundantly manifest the candid and enlightened spirit of our reformer. "We differ from these fanatics not merely in the article of baptism, but also in the general reason which they give for rejecting the baptism of infants. 'It was,' say they, 'a practice under the papacy.' Thus it was with them a sufficient reason for rejecting any thing that the papists had adopted. Now we

do not argue in that manner. We allow that in the papacy are many good things; and all those good things we have retained. What we affirm is this, That the popes have in many instances corrupted the apostolic church; and have preferred their own laws and ordinances to the laws and ordinances of Christ. Therefore, all that accumulated mass of human contrivances, which is of Satan's suggestion, and contributes to the destruction of the church of God, rather than to its edification, we entirely disapprove and reject. But here we stop. We would not imitate the man who on seeing his brother in the utmost danger of being killed by a wild boar, instantly pierced both the boar and his brother with one thrust of his spear. Perhaps some papists will accuse me of flattering the pope in this instance: my answer is, If the pope will bear such flattery as this, I will become his obedient son; I will be a good papist, and will recant all that I have said to offend him."

These sentiments are the more deserving of notice, because they have often been quoted in a mutilated way by the adversaries of the reformation, to show, that from Luther's concessions it might be proved there existed no necessity of a separation from the Church of Rome. The fact is, the Protestants never denied that the foundations of the faith were to be found in the Romish church; but they complained of great errors and abuses, and of numerous superstitions; and as they could obtain no relief, they determined not any longer to partake in the iniquity.

The judgment of Luther on the subject of religious toleration was called forth still more explicitly, by the vexation which the best Protestants of those times underwent from the practices of the fanatical sectarians, especially the Anabaptists. His worthy friend Lincus, probably in a state of irritation, had asked him, "Whether he conceived the magistrate to be justified in putting to death teachers of false religion;" a question then little understood, and on which wise and good men were not generally agreed till long afterward. "I am backward," replied Luther, "to pass a sentence of death, let the demerit be ever so apparent. For I am alarmed when I reflect on the conduct of the papists, who have so often abused the statutes of capital punishment against heresy, to the effusion of innocent blood. Among the Protestants, in process of time, I

foresee a great probability of a similar abuse, if they should now arm the magistrate with the same powers, and there should be left on record a single instance of a person having suffered capitally for the propagation of false doctrine. On this ground, I am decidedly against capital punishment in such cases, and think it quite sufficient that mischievous teachers of religion be removed from their situations."

That Martin Luther in such an age, and in opposition to the habits of a popish education, could maintain these sentiments of justice and moderation, must be considered as an extraordinary instance of that liberal and magnanimous spirit with which the Saxon reformer was eminently endowed; and the judicious reader will not be disposed to think worse of his practical conclusion in the matter of toleration, because he was led to rest his arguments on EXPERIENCE, rather than on visionary theories concerning the rights of private judgment. Where we are to look for examples of similar discrimination and freedom from party violence under any circumstances resembling those in which Luther was placed, I know not. Certainly we shall have occasion to lament, in the progress of this history, that some other reformers, even of the most gentle and beneficent tempers, were of a very different opinion, deceived, no doubt, by the perversion of Old Testament precedents, which derived their force from the Jewish theocracy.

In the point of consubstantiation, and in his refusal to hold an explicit fraternal communion with the sacramentarians, Luther still persisted. Of his conduct in this respect I pretend to give no satisfactory account. Let it be classed among the surprising inconsistencies which are to be observed in the history of human nature. Without doubt, it was in itself utterly indefensible, and also perfectly unlike what might have been expected from his general principles of toleration and facility in other articles, as well as from the uncommon sacrifices which he had made of a thousand prejudices of education, apparently much harder to be overcome than this.

Luther's uniform abhorrence of the inhumanity of consigning heretics to the sword or the flames appears on many occasions; and this both directly and indirectly. The following is an instance of the latter kind. His extreme aversion to the sacramentarians is not to be questioned; yet,

when the Elector of Saxony consulted him respecting a soldier, who, in his cups, had maintained the opinion of Zwingle, and reviled the doctrine of consubstantiation, he answered: "A man of this sort should be enjoined silence, rather than be permitted to mislead simple minds on a subject which he himself does not understand. But, if he will continue to talk, let him procure information from the clergy. At all events, he must not be allowed to abuse the lawful ministers of the country."

The direct testimonies of Luther against the cruelty of persecutors are innumerable. There is a remarkable one at the end of one of his little treatises on the sacrament. "Were there no other reason," says he, "for leaving the communion of the Church of Rome, this single one would be sufficient—they shed innocent blood, contrary not only to the divine, but even to the pontifical law itself. They have no statute which makes it death to communicate in both kinds, yet they burn laymen who do so. They also burn their priests for marrying; when the penalty of their law is only degradation. I say then, THEY ARE MEN OF BLOOD; and if I were at present a member of their communion, their savage barbarity would induce me to leave them for ever, even though I had no other fault to find with them."

It is a common, but at the same time an erroneous notion, that the difference of the sentiments of Luther from those of all that class of Protestants on the Continent who had no connexion with *his* churches, lay very much in the article of predestination. There is a twofold mistake in this position, originating, I conceive, in an inattention to those variations of doctrine, which, in the subsequent periods of the history of the reformation, took place both in the Lutheran and the other churches that separated themselves from the Romish communion. Certainly the Lutheran churches by degrees became more Arminian, and, in general, the rest of the Protestant churches more Calvinistic afterward. The impression that Luther was anti-Calvinistic in his sentiments must be effectually done away by an attentive consideration of his answers to Erasmus on the will. In truth, consubstantiation was the single point in the early part of the reformation on which the unhappy separation almost entirely turned: and the consequences of this schism deserve to be noticed by pious reformers in all ages, as a warning to

bury in silence their unimportant disagreements, rather than to perpetuate them by a formal and explicit contention.

Nevertheless, the Saxon theologian, though he denied, as we have repeatedly seen, the existence of all human ability to save a lost sinner, as also the efficacy of all human qualifications to merit reward; and though he ascribed salvation to grace alone, and to the merciful will of God; yet, on the delicate question of predestination, displayed that moderation by which his mind was uniformly influenced in all doctrinal inquiries except the one just named; and, content with what Scripture had revealed, he never undertook to explain the difficult subject with any thing like a systematic precision. Much less did he ever think proper to propose the arduous speculations concerning the divine decrees as necessary articles of a Christian's faith.

It happened, however, that a neighbouring minister, with a view of comforting one of his flock, whose mind was much distressed respecting the secret counsels of God, was desirous of obtaining from Luther more satisfaction on this head than could be collected from his publications. This circumstance gave to our reformer the occasion of writing an epistle, the substance of which will be allowed by all sincere Protestants to be well adapted to the purpose for which it was composed: and, as a curious and inquisitive spirit of prying into the inscrutable mysteries of the Divine will is but too often indulged by many serious persons, the perusal of a few quotations from Luther's advice may prove edifying to some pious readers.

"Many have perished," he says, "in the indulgence of such curious inquiries: it is a temptation which leads even to blasphemy. I myself, by giving way to it, have more than once been reduced to the last extremity. We, poor mortals, by faith can scarcely comprehend a few rays of the Divine promise, or receive in practice a few sparks of the Divine precepts; and yet, feeble and impure as we are, we rashly attempt to fathom the majesty of God in all its brightness. Do we not know that his ways are past finding out? Instead of using well the mild light of the promises which is adapted to our faculties, we rush, with the eyes of moles, to view at once the majestic splendour of the Deity. What wonder then if his glory should overwhelm us in the attempt to investigate it. We ought to know that there is such a thing as the secret will of God: but the danger is when we

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attempt to comprehend it. I am [illegible] to check myself with that answer of Christ to Peter, [illegible] was to become of John, 'What is that [illegible] me.' But suppose we could give an accurate account of the judgments of Almighty God in his secret determinations; what advantage would accrue to us from such knowledge, beyond what lies open to us from the promises and the precepts, the former addressed to our faith, the latter to our practice. Tell your friend, if he would have peace of mind, to abstain from such intricate speculations. The subject is incomprehensible, and the study of it may drive him to despair and blasphemy. Let him not give way to Satan, who would weary him out by presenting impossibilities to his mind. Let him exercise faith in the promises, and obey the commandments; and, when he has discharged those duties well, he will be able to judge whether he will have any time left for impossibilities. There is no other remedy than to neglect such thoughts, and not give way to them; though this is a difficult task, because Satan suggests the absolute necessity of attending to them. This battle however must be fought; and many persons fail in the contest by not suspecting their thoughts to be the temptations of Satan; whereas, these are the very 'fiery darts of that wicked one.' He himself fell from heaven by aiming at a knowledge above his station. Thus also he vanquished Adam, by teaching him to be dissatisfied with his ignorance concerning the will of God. Flight is the true wisdom here; there is no room for Christ to dwell in the heart, as long as reasonings of this kind are uppermost."

In another letter, while he admits the preordination and foreknowledge of God, he nevertheless argues, from Ezek. xviii. 23, ("Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God") that God chose, and seriously decreed from eternity, the possibility of the salvation and everlasting happiness of all men. And hence he concludes that the general promises of a gracious God ought by no means to be limited; nor those suggestions of Satan to be indulged, which would separate us from the Divine mercy, which is represented in Scripture as infinite. He then refers the afflicted penitent to the voice of God himself: "This is my beloved Son, hear him;" and to the words of Christ, proclaiming in the streets, "Come unto me,

all ye that labour." "He invites all, even the very worst, as publicans and harlots. Why should we perplex ourselves," he asks, "with difficult and circuitous roads, when the direct road is so clearly pointed out to us in the gospel."

We proceed now to a case of direct and formal intercourse of Luther and his friends with those eminent men who differed from him on the subject of the Eucharist.

It is a very just observation of Father Paul, that "in the cause of religion every subdivision is a strong weapon in the hand of the enemy." The zealous Landgrave of Hesse was so sensible of the importance of this maxim, that he spared no pains to unite the Lutheran and Zwinglian Protestants: and to bring them to act in concert against the common enemy. The unhappy disagreement of these sects was not only injurious to the reformation in general, but it also thwarted very much the military views of this active and magnanimous prince.

For the purpose of promoting the desirable union at which he aimed, the landgrave, in the year 1529, proposed a friendly conference to be held at Marpurg between the heads of the two denominations. Thither repaired, on the one side, Luther and Melancthon, and on the other Zwingle and Œcolampadius, together with several others, their friends respectively, and men of great note. It is unnecessary to detail the particulars of the conferences, which lasted several days. Suffice it to say, that they ended rather according to what might have been expected, than according to the Christian wishes of the landgrave. It was not probable that either Zwingle or Luther, in a public disputation on the nature of the presence of Christ in the sacrament, should retract the sentiments which he had long defended, and against which he would hear no argument advanced but what he had already repeatedly heard, considered, and, in his own judgment, satisfactorily answered. To this we may add the suggestions of Father Paul on this very occasion. "That the controversy having proceeded so far, the honour of the leaders seemed to be involved in the question; and also that, *in verbal contentions the smallness of the difference often nourishes the obstinacy of the parties.*" It appears that Luther, conscious of his own positive determination not to give way one hair's breadth on the point of consubstan-

tiation, and also well aware of the steady character of the Swiss reformer, from the first clearly foresaw the event of the debates at Marpurg, and was induced to go thither only or chiefly lest the adverse party should have to boast that they were more disposed than himself to adopt measures of peace and concord. The narratives of the party-historians concerning this business contain many bitter things which are best passed over, especially as the sincerity of the motives of the controversialists cannot reasonably be doubted. We are bound however to mark with the most entire disapprobation that unchristian stubbornness of temper which manifested itself in Luther at the conclusion of the conferences. The sacramentarians, as they were called, begged hard to be acknowledged as brethren. They even went so far as to own repeatedly that the body of Christ was verily present in the Lord's Supper, though in a spiritual manner; and Zwingle himself, in pressing for mutual fraternity, declared with tears that there were no men in the world with whom he more earnestly wished to agree than with the Wittemberg divines. Even the landgrave personally exerted himself, with all his might, to produce a cordial friendship. But the spirit of Luther proved perfectly untractable and intolerant. Nothing more could be gained from him than that each side should show Christian charity to the other *as far as they conscientiously could*; and that both should diligently pray God to lead them into the truth. To go further, Luther maintained, was impossible; and he expressed astonishment that the Swiss divines could look upon him as a Christian brother when they did not believe his doctrine to be true. In such circumstances, however, though there could be no such thing as fraternal union, the parties, he allowed, might preserve a friendly sort of peace and concord; might do good turns to each other; and abstain from harsh and acrimonious language.

Certain articles were drawn up, and signed by the several parties. These furnish a very useful document to the curious inquirer, and confirm what we have stated of the substantial agreement of the subscribers on all points but one.

The progress of divine knowledge, the genuine conversion of souls, and the abolition of abominable superstitions, had now been carried on with no great interruption for the

space of more than ten years; that is, till the year 1529, reckoning from the year 1517; when Luther first raised his voice against the sale of indulgences, and soon after pointed out the Roman pontiff himself as the guilty author of this iniquitous traffic. The success of the gospel during this period was perhaps without parallel since the apostolic age. Not all the remonstrances of the imperial regency could deter the great city of Strasburg from adopting, in 1529, the bold resolution of abolishing the mass: nor could Count Philip of Hanover, though menaced with formidable opposition, be restrained from introducing, in the same year, evangelical doctrine throughout his dominions. Even in Italy, we are told by Father Paul, there was public preaching against the Church of Rome, and the gospellers increased every day.

We must not however forget, that notwithstanding this blessed influence of the written Word, persons who openly avowed their conviction of the truth were miserably exposed to persecution, in all those places where either the civil or the ecclesiastical ruler happened to be an active and zealous Roman Catholic. The catalogue of the sufferers is very considerable. It may however suffice to add, to the instances already noticed, a few others of the most remarkable cases.

Joachim, the Elector of Brandenburg, distinguished himself at this time in persecuting the Lutherans. This bigoted prince had confined for some days in her chamber, on account of her attachment to the gospel, his own wife Elizabeth, the sister of the exiled King of Denmark, and was intending to immure her perpetually; when, by the help of her brother, she effected a wonderful escape from Berlin; was conveyed in the wagon of a peasant, and hospitably received by the Elector of Saxony.

Ursula Dutchess of Munsterberg had also this year a most miraculous escape from the monastery of Friberg: and fled with two virgins to Luther for protection. This was a most mortifying event to George of Saxony; for this dutchess was his own cousin.

In France the persecutions were dreadful. The papists persuaded the king that all the misfortunes with which the country was afflicted were owing to the mischievous Lu-

theran heresy. In consequence, the most sanguinary laws were solemnly decreed against Lutheranism, and every one who could be proved to favour the doctrine was treated as a blasphemer. Yet this same prince, Francis I., notwithstanding the zeal with which his Catholic clergy availed to inspire him, had no objection, for the purpose of more effectually serving his political schemes, to endeavour, by the medium of his ambassadors, to promote in Switzerland that very reformation of religion which he was labouring to expel from his own kingdom by fire and sword. Zwingle, in a letter to Œcolampadius, tells us that the royal ambassadors of France pressed the five Catholic cantons of Switzerland to allow the Word of God to be preached among them, according to the system of the reformers.

In North Holland, a widow, named Wendelmut, was seized on account of her religion, carried to the Hague, and there strangled, and afterward burnt to ashes. On her examination concerning the mass, she answered, "It is a piece of bread;" and in regard to the images and pictures of saints she confessed she knew of no other mediator but Jesus Christ. To one that told her she did not fear death because she had not tasted it, this widow replied, "I shall never taste it; for Christ has said, If any man keep my sayings he shall never see death." She was then advised to confess her sins to a priest: upon which she cried aloud, "I have confessed all my sins to Christ my Lord, who takes away all sin. But if I have offended my neighbours, I heartily ask them forgiveness." She then went to the place of execution with meekness and courage.

It is said that some of the Moravian brethren, as well as other pious persons of those times, were baptized a second time; and this, not as proselytes of Anabaptism, but merely because they could then see no other way of separating themselves from a wicked world. And we may observe, in general, that it is not always easy to distinguish, in the accounts of the Anabaptist martyrs, *who* were truly humble Christians. We cannot however doubt of the reality of the *sufferings* of the unfortunate victims, when the facts are distinctly recorded with triumph by the Romish historians themselves. On this ground we select from Cochlæus, who otherwise is rarely to be trusted in any question respecting the reformers, the following testimonies to the execrable

barbarity of the papists. "At Rotenberg by the river Neckar, many of the Anabaptists, both men and women, were apprehended; and all put to death that refused to recant their errors. Nine men were burned: ten women were drowned. But their leader and teacher, Michael Sellarius, an apostate monk, who was by far the greatest offender, was condemned in a public court of judicature to have his blasphemous tongue cut out, to be tied to a curricle, and to have two pieces of his flesh torn from his body, in the market-place, by red-hot pincers; then to be torn again afterward in the same manner by the hot pincers five times on the road, as he was dragged to the burning pile." This sentence, the author tells us, was executed on the 17th of May, 1527; and he proceeds to exclaim what a grievous deceiver Sellarius had been; and among other things mentions his teaching the people not to invoke saints; but not one word escapes this malignant and bigoted historian concerning the firmness, patience, or piety of the martyr.

At Tournay in Flanders, an Augustinian monk, named Henry, was this year condemned to the flames, for having thrown off his dress, married a wife, and preached against popery. The bishop's official told him he might save his life, if he would but own that the woman he had married was not his wife, but his concubine. But he, refusing to lengthen his days on such terms, praised God by singing Te Deum, and soon after cheerfully finished his course in the fire. Thus, year after year, do we find these horrible traces of antichristian cruelty following the track of the gospel, and wreaking its vengeance on those who embraced it in faith and love.

Notwithstanding these dreadful narratives, however, there is no doubt that the violence of the war between Francis I. and the emperor, as also the dissensions between the emperor and the pope, proved extremely favourable to the progress of the reformation. For, though the spirit of persecution was not in the least abated, yet it spent its chief fury on such defenceless individuals as happened to fall into the cruel hands of some bigoted ruler, ecclesiastic or civil. The three potentates above mentioned were themselves beset with too many difficulties in their political affairs to give much serious and steady attention to the business of religion.

Add to this, that their respective interests were often so opposite and perplexed, as entirely to preclude all amicable concurrence in the formation of any general plan for the extirpation of heresy. In effect, it is by reflecting on these jarring interests, with an overruling Providence constantly in mind, that we are enabled in some measure to account, not only for the mild decree of the diet of Spires in 1526, but also for the inefficiency of the succeeding attempts of the great papal powers to stifle the revival of Christian truth and liberty. The pope, no doubt, was sincere in his desires to crush every symptom of growing Protestantism; but Charles V. had neither leisure nor inclination to gratify the wishes of a pontiff who had so lately entered into an alliance against him with the French and the Venetians. The religion of this prince, as far as it was real, must be considered as Roman Catholic; but, whatever it was, he never suffered it to interfere with his ambitious schemes of secular aggrandizement. Even the pope himself ceased to have the least influence with him the moment the politics of the court of Rome appeared to thwart his designs. On the other hand, the principles of Clement VII. were in no degree better. Under the pretence that hard and unjust terms had been extorted from the King of France while a prisoner in Spain after the battle of Pavia, Clement at once absolved him from the oath by which he was bound to execute the treaty of Madrid, and sent a person both to congratulate him on his deliverance from captivity, and to settle a treaty against Charles; and lastly, he despatched a brief to the emperor, full of accusation, invective, and menace.

This proceeding of Clement VII. inflamed the resentment of the emperor to such a degree, that he abolished the authority of the Roman pontiff throughout all his Spanish dominions, made war upon him in Italy, laid siege to Rome, and blocked up Clement himself in the castle of St. Angelo, where he was reduced to the extremity of feeding on ass's flesh, and at length compelled to capitulate on severe terms, and to remain a prisoner until the chief articles were performed.

Such in brief were the important consequences of that confederacy which has been termed the HOLY LEAGUE, because the pope was at the head of it. The detail of the

war we leave to the secular historians; but, for the sake of laying open the secret motives of the principal actors, and thereby explaining a number of circumstances, otherwise utterly inexplicable, in the history of the church of Christ, we judge it expedient to give some account of two memorable letters which the emperor thought fit to write, one of them to the pope himself, the other to his cardinals at Rome, before he came to an absolute rupture with Clement VII.

In the former, he accuses the pope of ingratitude, putting him in mind that it was by his assistance he had been raised to the pontifical chair. The King of England, he said, had been called the protector of the holy league; whereas that monarch had assured him, in his letters, that he neither had accepted nor would accept that title, though the pope had pressed him to do so. The King of France, he moreover said, made no scruple to own publicly, that, before he returned from Madrid to his own country, he had been urged by the pope to enter into the new alliance; and the emperor added, that he knew the pope had absolved him from the oath by which he was bound either to observe the articles of peace or return to his captivity. He then put his holiness in mind, that the pope of Rome received more money from the subjects of the emperor than from all the other kings of Christendom put together: that a judgment might be formed of the magnitude of those annual receipts, from the hundred grievances which had been presented to his court by the Germanic body; that, as emperor, such had always been his devotion and reverence for the apostolic see, that he had hitherto forborne to listen to the complaints of his German subjects; but that if, for good reasons, he should be driven to withhold those revenues, then the pope would no longer possess the golden keys which open and shut the gates of war; he would no longer be allowed to carry on hostilities against the emperor with the money which belonged to the subjects of his imperial highness; for that it would certainly be more just for the emperor to apply that money to the purposes of his own defence. He concludes by roundly telling the pope, that if he were still determined to go on with the war, and would not listen to the reasons he had alleged, he should look upon him as acting, not the part of a father, but of the head of a faction; not of a pastor,

but of an invader of the just rights of sovereigns. This, he said, was his ultimatum, and he should appeal to a general council of the whole Christian world.

In his letter addressed to the college of cardinals, Charles, with much parade, insists on the purity of his intentions, his great moderation, and continued endeavours to establish peace and tranquillity. How shocked then and how disgusted, he said, must any one be to read the brief which had been delivered to him by the nuncio, and had the sanction of so eminent a pontiff and of so many pious and Christian fathers. It was evidently written for the express purpose of vilifying and degrading the emperor, who was the protector of the apostolic see. It breathed nothing but war, sedition, false and injurious accusations against himself; and yet there was not any prince who so much respected the holy see, or defended its dignity with so disinterested a care. It was his innate reverence for the Roman hierarchy which had induced him, when he was at the diet of Worms, to turn a deaf ear to all the importunate complaints and petitions of the Germans. In effect, by the steps he had taken to serve the pope he had in some measure alienated the minds of his German subjects, particularly by forbidding, under a heavy penalty, the intended assembly of the princes at Spires. He had prohibited that convention because he foresaw such a meeting would prove disadvantageous to the pope; and, in order to sooth the minds of the princes under their disappointment, he had then given them the hope of having a general council in a short time. He had explained all these things with great care to the pope, and had admonished him to call a council. He concluded with requesting the cardinals to concur with himself in putting Clement VII. in mind of his duty, and in exhorting him to preserve the peace of Christendom; which good purpose would be best effected by the convocation of a general council without further delay; and, in case the pope should persist in refusing to hear reason, he called on the cardinals themselves to come forward, and in their own name summon the council which was so much wanted. And lastly, if the reverend fathers should oppose his equitable requisition, he told them, he himself would not fail to use such remedies as God had put in his power, for the protection of religion, and the tranquillity of Christendom.

Charles V. in his indignation against Clement, published these manifestoes, and did every thing he could to give notoriety to his complaints. The German Protestants also most industriously dispersed them; and we need not wonder that such extraordinary documents should have been read with prodigious eagerness. What could those who well remembered the emperor's solemn declarations, both at Worms and on other occasions, against Lutheranism, now think of his religion or conscience, when they heard him confess that he had stopped his ears against the honest prayers of Germany merely to please the pope. Who would scruple to say, that, having betrayed the interests of his imperial subjects, he could in his own turn expect no better than to be betrayed by an unprincipled pontiff. No more needs to be said to convince thinking persons of the effects which must have been produced on the public mind by these manifestoes of the emperor. Full as acrimonious and reproachful as the bitterest invectives of Luther, they not only imboldened men, after the example of Charles, to treat the pope with little reverence, but also lowered exceedingly the credit of the whole dominant ecclesiastical establishment, and of all its most strenuous supporters. The publication of them had in effect divulged a dangerous secret, which by many indeed was sufficiently known before, but which it yet required extraordinary confidence in Charles publicly to avow, "That reverence towards the pope was no more than an art of government covered with the cloak of religion."* The disclosure of so much political manœuvre and defective morality did more than counterbalance all that he had hitherto done against the reformers; whose conduct, ever marked by ingenuousness and plain dealing, appeared a perfect contrast to all this duplicity, artifice, and inconsistency.

If the contention and animosity of two such unprincipled potentates as the pope and the emperor, thus operated in 1526 at the diet of Spires to check the persecuting spirit of the Romanists, and to prevent any systematic attempt to exterminate the Protestants, it required no great foresight to predict the lamentable consequences of their union or alliance. To their lasting shame be it recorded, that the

* Father Paul.

moment a prospect opened for the accommodation of their own respective political differences, both Clement VII. and Charles V. concurred in wreaking their united vengeance on the defenders of the sacred cause of religion and liberty.

The decree of the former diet of Spires was equivalent to a toleration of Luther's opinions in all the states where those opinions were approved by their respective governors or magistrates: but in the year 1529 a new diet was assembled at the same place, when the said decree was, by a majority of suffrages, so far revoked as to forbid all further propagation of novel opinions in religion: those who had observed the execution of the edict of Worms were ordered to continue the execution of it; those who had changed their religious system, and could not without danger of sedition revert to the ancient usages, were to be quiet, and make no further innovation till the meeting of a council; the celebration of mass was not to be obstructed in any place whatever; and lastly, the Anabaptists were proscribed in the severest terms, and made subject to capital punishments.

The motives of Clement in this business were sufficiently intelligible. A pope of Rome, in peace or in war, confined and starved in a castle, or reseated in the chair of St. Peter, issuing briefs and bulls for the terror of Christendom, never loses sight of his grand object, the maintenance of his supreme and despotical jurisdiction; well aware, that should that be in the least impaired, the whole edifice of the pontifical authority would be thereby at once endangered.

The precise views of Charles V. in urging the harsh decree of this diet may admit of some doubt. Perhaps he hoped thereby to attach firmly to his interests, or at least to soothe and gratify the pope, whose sacred character he had lately insulted with so many indignities. Perhaps he beheld the new doctrines as leading to close and durable confederacies in Germany, which might eventually weaken the imperial authority. Or he might imagine, that a resolute, well-timed, and rigorous exertion of authority would prove useful both for the protection and extension of his prerogatives, several of which, he would naturally suppose, were not much relished by a bold and turbulent race of people, of whom almost one-half had already revolted from the papal domination. These, it must be owned, are only con-

jectures, but we are sure that the ambition of this prince was restless, insatiable, and constantly impelling him both to narrow the power of the Roman see and also to encroach on the liberties of his German subjects. He had abundantly satisfied his revenge in the late humiliation of Clement, yet he still menaced that pontiff with the prospect of an impending general council: and in regard to the Germans, he certainly looked on their domestic troubles and divisions as in the main extremely favourable to his arbitrary and despotic intention. Charles was what the world calls a great politician, but not what the Scripture describes as a good man. His understanding became vitiated by his inordinate thirst after dominion, and by his unexampled prosperity, insomuch, that notwithstanding all his natural good sense, and all his experience, he was frequently the dupe of his own intricate schemes and projects.

Iniquitous as was the decree of the second diet of Spires, it would doubtless have been much more rigorous and oppressive, if Charles had not been still at war with the French and his inveterate rival Francis I. The recess of this diet is dated in April: and the peace of Cambray, between the emperor and the King of France, was not concluded till the succeeding August.

Fourteen imperial cities,* with the Elector of Saxony, the Marquis of Brandenburg, the Dukes of Lunenburg, and the Prince of Anhalt at their head, in firm but moderate language solemnly PROTESTED against the decree of the diet, as unjust and intolerable, and in every way calculated to produce discontent and tumult. Hence arose for the first time the denomination of PROTESTANTS†—an honourable appellation, which not only in Germany but in other nations, is given to all those sects of Christians who renounce the superstitious Romish communion.

The Protestant princes and protectors of the reformed churches were not satisfied with merely expressing their dissent from the decree of the diet: they also drew up all

* Strasburg, Nuremberg, Ulm, Constance, Reutlingen, Windsheim, Meinengen. Lindau, Kempten, Hailbron, Isna, Weissemburg, Nordlingen, and St. Gall.

† This term, on account of its convenience, has been frequently anticipated in the course of this history.—Ernest Duke of Lunenburg, one of these first Protestants, was the ancestor of the British royal family.

their grievances in form; and appealed to the emperor and to a future general council, or to a lawful Germanic council, and to all impartial judges. Lastly, they fixed upon ambassadors, whom they directed to lay all their proceedings before his imperial majesty. Charles had not been present at the late diet, but had received from his brother Ferdinand, who had there presided in his place, an exact account of all that passed; and having at length concluded a peace with France, was now in Italy on his road to Bologna.

The German ambassadors were introduced to him at Placentia, and there they executed their commission with a spirit and resolution worthy of the princes whom they represented. Nothing, however, could be more discouraging than the reception they met with from this haughty monarch, whose vain mind was now puffed up with a series of extraordinary successes. By a message delivered to the deputies three days before they were admitted into his presence, he admonished them to be brief in what they had to say, and on their introduction he repeated the same admonition. Afterward, when he had heard their objections to the decree, and they had waited a full month for his answer, he told them, "That he exceedingly lamented their divisions, but nevertheless insisted on obedience to the decree, which was passed for the purpose of putting an end to the mischievous sects of every description. He had written, he said, to the Elector of Saxony and his associates, and had commanded them, in conformity to their oaths, to obey the decree of the diet, and if they were refractory, he should be compelled, for the sake of example and good government, to punish such contumacy with severity. He asserted, that himself and the rest of the princes regarded the peace of their consciences and the salvation of their souls as much as the Protestants could do; and moreover that he was also as desirous of a general council as they could be—though there would not be much occasion for it, provided the lawful decrees of the diet, especially that of Worms, were duly enforced."

On receiving this answer, the ambassadors produced the act of appeal, as it had been drawn up at Spires; but Charles's minister for some time refused to deliver it to his master; and afterward, when he had ventured to present

that spirited memorial, the monarch's pride was so severely wounded by this instance of opposition to his will, that in a rage he ordered the German ambassadors to be put under an arrest for some days; and, on pain of death, neither to stir a foot from their apartments nor write a line to the Protestant princes.

The account of this contemptuous and violent procedure of Charles V. soon found its way to Nuremberg, and convinced the Protestant party that it was high time for them to consult for their protection against a powerful potentate, intoxicated with success, and irritated by opposition. Whatever hopes they might place in foreign assistance, it was plain that little was to be done without unanimity at home. The papal adherents had for a long time been well aware of this; and at the diet of Spires had employed two of their most able and artful agents, Eckius and Faber, now Bishop of Vienna, to exert their utmost efforts in widening the breach between the disciples of Luther and of Zwingle. On the other side, the Landgrave of Hesse, both at Spires and afterward at Marpurg, exhausted all the means which human prudence could suggest, to bring about, if possible, between the contending parties an accommodation of so much importance, in the present struggle for deliverance from the yoke of superstition and ecclesiastical despotism. In effect, the heads of the Protestants, even while they were in suspense respecting the emperor's answer to their embassy, were so much alarmed at the late decree of Spires, that, for the wise purpose of enlarging and cementing a defensive confederacy, they had a solemn conference at Roth in the month of June; and at Nuremberg they drew up certain articles of their intended alliance. In the succeeding October they met again at Sultzbach, and upon hearing of the severe treatment of their ambassadors at Placentia, they again assembled about the end of November at Smalkald; and lastly, once more at Nuremberg, early in the January of the succeeding year, 1530.

All these deliberations, owing to the various and jarring sentiments of the deputies, failed of producing the desirable issue. The sacramentarian dissension, exasperated by the incurable obstinacy of Luther, appears to have been the principal, though perhaps not the only, obstruction to

unanimity. The tender conscience of the Elector of Saxony rendered this prince averse to a military confederacy, even of defence, which might seem formed in opposition to the legitimate government of the country. His scruples are well known to have originated from Luther, who, a little before the convention at Smalkald, exhorted him in the strongest terms not to think of using force against the emperor in the defence of religion. In his arguments he was supported by Melancthon and Bugenhagen.

At Nuremberg, in January, the deputies had almost resolved to send a new and more dignified embassy to his imperial majesty; but the assembly was thinly attended, and as it was understood that the emperor would soon summon another diet of all the Germanic princes and orders, they abandoned their first intentions, and contented themselves with coming to this ultimate resolution: That each state should deliberate for itself, and within the space of a month transmit to the Elector of Saxony its peculiar sentiment, in order that the Protestants at so critical a juncture might act in concert, both in regard to the common defence, and also to the objects to be aimed at in the ensuing diet.

Charles V. arrived at Bologna on the 5th of November, 1529, and on the 31st of January, of the succeeding year, sent his mandatory letters into Germany for the purpose of summoning a general diet of the empire, to be held at Augsburg on the 8th day of April. At Bologna, on the 24th of February, his own birth-day, he was crowned with great pomp by the pope himself; with whom he continued to reside in the same palace till the following month of March.

During the winter months these two mighty potentates had held many consultations concerning the state of religion in Germany, and the best methods of extirpating heresy, but their views were materially different. The pope dreaded nothing so much as general councils, which he represented as factious, and, at best, slow in their operation. The case, he said, was desperate, and required speedy and rigorous measures: the clemency of the emperor, he urged, was ill-judged, and had in effect exasperated the spirit of rebellion; and it was now incumbent on him to support the church, and crush the heretics by force. Charles, though at this time much disposed to gratify the pope, was con-

vinced that his German subjects were not to be trifled with; and it is not improbable that he might feel some compunction for having lately exhibited so much unreasonable resentment in his insolent treatment of their ambassadors at Placentia.

Whether the mind of the emperor really revolted at the iniquitous suggestion of condemning the honest Protestants unheard, and of putting an end at once to their political existence, it may be hard to say: certain it is, that in the conferences with the pope at Bologna, whatever approached in the least degree to moderation and impartiality originated with Charles V., and not with Clement VII. The pope and his whole party demonstrated by their activity in open persecution, and by their secret manœuvres which have since transpired, that they sighed for the universal destruction of Protestantism. The emperor in his own judgment, there is reason to believe, deemed the convocation of a council to be the proper expedient at this season; but, having peremptorily refused to comply with the sanguinary proposals of the pope, he was disposed so far to humour his holiness as first to adopt a less offensive measure, namely, the appointment of a diet of the empire. A general council was the next thing to be tried; but it was agreed, that without the most urgent necessity, recourse should not be had to a remedy, the mere mention of which filled the mind of Clement with the most harassing apprehensions; and, in every event, Charles appears to have bound himself by an unequivocal promise to use the most efficacious endeavours for the reduction of all the rebellious adversaries of the Roman Catholic religion.

Notwithstanding the disposition in which the emperor left Bologna, the pope had the precaution to appoint Cardinal Campeggio not only as his own representative and plenipotentiary at the ensuing diet, but also as an honorary attendant on his imperial majesty during all his journey to Augsburg; and to secure still more effectually the pontifical interests, he despatched Peter Paul Vergerio as his nuncio to Ferdinand in Germany, with secret instructions to consult with that prince, and strain every nerve to hinder the convocation of a council. Vergerio was a canonist, and proved himself well qualified for the commission with which he was intrusted. He injured the Lutherans by every

method he could devise. The exertions of the popish divines, Eckius, Faber, and Cochlæus, might undoubtedly have been depended upon, but Vergerio thought it best to ensure their activity by munificent presents. He was likewise directed to gratify King Ferdinand, by informing him that the pope was ready to grant him, in support of the war against the Turks, both a contribution from the clergy of Germany, and also the gold and silver ornaments of the churches. Thus did the Roman pontiff, with fire and sword in one hand, and artifice and corruption in the other, endeavour to extirpate the pious Protestants; while, with consummate hypocrisy, he expressed the most ardent wishes for peace and harmony, and for the restoration of gospel principles in the church of Christ.

We will conclude this volume with a brief notice of the conduct of Luther about the time of this very critical conjuncture.

Before the diet of Augsburg, in the year 1529, while the tempest of persecution was lowering on the faithful, this indefatigable servant of God was employed in publishing his smaller and greater Catechisms, which at this day are treatises of authority in the Lutheran churches. In the preface to each, he deplores the ignorance of the people at large, and asserts that those who know nothing of Christian principles ought not even to be called by their name. He expatiates on the utility of catechising; recommends the frequent use of it to masters of families; cites his own example of attending to the first catechetical truths for the purpose of edification, notwithstanding the proficiency which, in a course of years, he might be supposed to have made; and observes, that daily reading and meditation, among many other advantages, has this, that a new light and unction from the Holy Spirit is hence, from time to time, afforded to the humble soul. With such godly simplicity was Luther conversant in the Christian practice; and so totally distinct were the spiritual understanding and improvement which he desired to encourage in the church from the mere theory of frigid theological disquisition. Perhaps no history since the days of the apostles affords a more remarkable instance of the humility and condescension of a primary theologian, in stooping to the infirmities of the

weak, and lowering himself to the most uncultivated minds, than is exhibited by the publication of these two catechisms.

In the same year, Luther attached to Melancthon's Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians a memorable eulogium on the author; in which he frankly declared, that he preferred the works of Melancthon to his own, and was desirous that they should be read rather than any thing which he himself had composed. "I," says he, "am born to be a rough controvertist; I clear the ground, pull up weeds, fill up ditches, and smooth the roads. But to build, to plant, to sow, to water, to adorn the country, belongs, by the grace of God, to Melancthon."

It was a singular felicity of the infant church of Saxony, that its two great luminaries, exceedingly diverse as they were in temper and in gifts, should have been constantly united in the bonds of a strict affection, which never seems to have admitted the least degree of envy or jealousy. Such is the light in which these two worthies are transmitted to posterity—an incontestable pair of disinterested friends, whose sole object of contention was to excel each other in proofs of mutual regard!

END OF VOL. I.

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